

# A HANDBOOK OF EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWING

BY

**JOHN MUNRO FRASER, M.A.**

*(Department of Industrial Administration,  
College of Technology, Birmingham)*

Crown 8vo

**THIRD EDITION**

**263 pp.**

(Based on the Five-fold Grading, with two field studies in assessment)

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Getting people into the jobs they like and can do well is one of the most important tasks facing management today. To tackle it successfully is to take a further step towards industrial efficiency, and also to increase the number of people who derive some satisfaction and sense of achievement from their work.

Of all methods of selection, the interview is the most convenient, and will remain the most widely used in practice. It is not always easy, however, to sum up an individual's potentialities in a short conversation.

This book shows how a systematic approach enables the interviewer to narrow the margin of error in assessment and avoid mistakes in placement. Examples are given of how the methods described have been applied in practice, and the levels of success that may be expected.

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Mr. John Munro Fraser is a graduate of Glasgow University and has had several years of management experience in manufacturing industry and on the personnel staff of a large distributive organisation. He spent a period on the staff of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology where he was engaged, among other duties, in consultant and instructional work on selection. During the war, after a period of regimental and staff duty, he was appointed to the headquarters of the organisation responsible for advising repatriated prisoners-of-war about their civil employment on release from the army.

In 1952 he was appointed Senior Lecturer in the Human Relations Aspects of Management in the Department of Industrial Administration at the College of Technology, Birmingham. In addition to normal instructional work among management students, this post offered opportunities to collaborate with local industrial organisations on the development and application of selection methods. It is hoped that in due course a body of knowledge will be built up about the levels of success to be expected in the normal working of personnel departments. Preliminary results are already becoming available and some of these have been included in this edition.

Since its first publication in 1950, this book has become, to some extent, the standard text on interviewing. It does not claim to be an academic study of the structure of personality, nor to delve deeply into the psychology of the interview. It is, rather, a practical handbook for those who are faced with the day-to-day task of finding the right man for the job, or deciding how to make the best use of available man-power. It describes a method which can be applied by anyone with a modicum of sympathy and insight, who is prepared to take a little trouble with the individuals who come before him.

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A HANDBOOK OF  
EMPLOYMENT  
INTERVIEWING



TO  
ELIZABETH SHAW FRASER, L.L.A.



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with an account of two field studies in  
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## PREFACE

THIS book is the result of several years on the scientific staff of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology, largely spent on consultant work in connection with higher appointments and on the training of employment interviewers. The alternation between carrying out interviews oneself, and teaching others how to do so, provides a salutary discipline in the arranging of one's ideas on method for instructional purposes, and the submission of these ideas to the acid test of practice.

Working among colleagues engaged on similar tasks means that one lives in an atmosphere where the exchange and cross-fertilisation of ideas is particularly free and rapid. It is quite impossible to say, therefore, how much my thinking owes to past and present members of the Institute staff, and how much is my own individual contribution. I am glad to acknowledge my debt to all those individuals with whom I have worked and to the community of which I have been a member. It is a matter for regret to me that the death of its founder, Dr. C. S. Myers, prevents my making a personal acknowledgement to him.

The views expressed in the following pages are nevertheless entirely my own and, however much I may have been influenced by others, the responsibility for any shortcomings must rest with me. I trust that these shortcomings will not be so obvious as to prevent this book from being of some help to the men and women who carry out this important task in the day-to-day working of industry.

JOHN MUNRO FRASER

June 1954

## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

THIS book was intended to serve as a practical text-book for those who are concerned with interviewing and selection in industry. It was therefore written in as straightforward a style as possible, and an attempt was made to steer clear of purely academic issues. I have always been convinced, however, that adequate interviewing and assessment depends upon an understanding of the structure of human personality, and this, in turn, calls for a theory of personality which is sufficiently comprehensive to account for most of the variations the student is likely to meet, while at the same time it is not too abstruse for the normal reader to grasp. For many years the Seven-point Plan of the National Institute of Psychology has served this purpose.

This Plan, however, has the limitation that it makes no provision on the surface for differences in level between individuals. Moreover, seven points are sometimes found difficult to remember and keep separate. In the literature of psychology three aspects of the mind are frequently referred to, the Cognitive, the Conative, and the Affective, and they seem to denote three fairly fundamental viewpoints on human behaviour. There is obviously also a physical aspect to the individual, though in the present-day world it is frequently the superficialities of appearance, speech, and manner that count for more than actual strength or agility. Finally, each individual is culturally conditioned, not only from the point of view of actual



knowledge and experience, but also as regards his expectations and way of life. Five headings, therefore, probably represent the irreducible minimum on which any adequate account of personality can be based.

Most of the variations between individuals in a homogeneous population seem to conform to a Gaussian distribution, which lends itself easily to the construction of five-point scales. Presented with five headings on the one hand, and five gradings on the other, it seemed an obvious step to combine them into one framework of vertical and horizontal divisions. This was given the title of the Five-fold Grading, and has been used successfully for selection and instructional purposes for the last three years. The need for a third edition of this Handbook provides the opportunity for revising it in terms of what appears to be a more adequate theory of personality, and for including some preliminary studies of its applications in practice.

I hope that the Seven-point Plan and the Five-fold Grading will not come to be regarded as rival "systems", and that their co-existence will not give rise to confusion in the minds of students. One has developed naturally out of the other, and each may have its own advantages in particular spheres. What is important is that neither should obscure the main issue by becoming the focus of controversy. And the main issue is a more widely spread understanding of human potentialities so that they can be given proper scope in the working life of an industrial community.

JOHN MUNRO FRASER.

May 1954

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## CHAPTER I

### WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

IN the inexpensive hat department of a West End Store a good saleswoman sells about eighty hats a week. In the same department with the same merchandise a poor saleswoman sells about thirty a week, rather less than half.

Cigarette-making machines are fully automatic. The operator cannot vary the speed, which is round about a thousand cigarettes a minute. Yet at the end of the day the best operator in the department has produced significantly more than the slowest, and a similar difference will be found consistently day after day and week after week.

These examples illustrate differences in output which are found in every job, for wherever a number of people are working together on the same kind of task, there are variations in the amount and quality of the work produced. It is not unusual to find that the best worker turns out twice as much as the slowest. Nor do these variations necessarily depend on age or length of training. Two people of the same age may start on a new job the same day. It will soon be apparent that one is picking it up more quickly than the other, and after a few weeks he may be fully trained while his companion cannot yet be trusted on his own. In a year's time a similar difference will be apparent.

For any particular job, then, some people are well

suited. They pick it up quickly, and soon become fast and accurate workers. For the same job, other people may not be suited. They take a long time to train and may never attain a satisfactory standard of quality or output.

### **Happiness at Work**

Most departments have their "awkward type", the man who always has a complaint, who makes difficulties where none exist, the one around whom trouble inevitably seems to centre. Such people are usually rather unhappy in one way or another and they seem to get little or no satisfaction from their work. In many cases—and this is usually significant—they are not really very good at their job.

A good many people, however, get on reasonably well at work. They may not get any lively pleasure out of it perhaps, but they rub along well enough, possibly aware of a vague sense of dissatisfaction at times, but feeling nevertheless that things might be a good deal worse.

There are a few people, also, who really seem to enjoy their jobs. They get a sense of achievement from them, a feeling of having done something worth doing and done it well. These are the lucky ones, for the daily round which to others is merely tedious and rather meaningless, is pleasant and stimulating to them and full of agreeable experiences. They bring to their work a sense of purpose and they derive from it a feeling of achievement. In most cases they are outstandingly good at their job.

Linking up success and satisfaction at work in this way, when we consider any particular job we shall find that individuals fall into three categories in relation to it:

(a) Those who are well suited to it, who will be easy to train, who will do it well and find satisfaction in it.

(b) Those who are badly suited to it, who will find it hard to pick up, and who will be neither successful nor satisfied.

(c) A middle category which will fall somewhere between.

When we look at the matter from the individual person's point of view, jobs will fall into three similar categories.

(a) There are some he will be good at and will enjoy doing.

(b) There are some he will never do well, and which will irritate and bore him.

(c) A middle grade, where he will get on fairly well, without being either outstandingly successful or seriously dissatisfied.

This is usually borne out by one's own experience and observation, and when people go into jobs haphazardly it is obvious that the usual processes of chance will operate. Only a few find work which really suits them well, while a few get into jobs for which they are definitely unfitted. The majority fall into work which is in their "middle range" of suitability. They do it fairly well and are not seriously dissatisfied, though they feel they might perhaps have done better.

### **Better Allocation**

If there were some means available by which we could put everyone into a job for which he was particularly well suited, what would be the result?



For one thing we should achieve a much higher level of production from the same equipment and man-power. Suppose we have a section of 20 men, the best of whom is turning out 130 units a day and the slowest 70 units a day—not an unusual range of difference with men of various standards of suitability. Suppose also that the average output of the 20 men is 100 units, giving an aggregate production of 2000 units a day from the section (see Fig. 1). Now if it were possible—which it is not—suddenly to replace all the less suitable by above-average producers, how would production be affected? The variation in daily output would shrink to between 100 and 130, the average would rise to, say, 110, and the total output from the section would rise to 2,200 units per day. This 10 per cent. increase would be achieved without the addition of extra workers or equipment and without anyone having to work any harder (see Fig. 2).

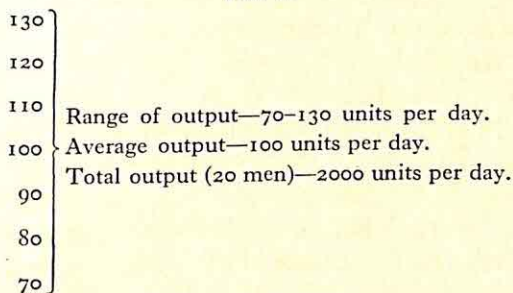
But there would be another result of no less importance. By putting more people in jobs from which they can get some satisfaction and sense of achievement, and by reducing the number oppressed by a sense of inadequacy and failure in their work, we should increase the sum of human happiness. Work occupies an important place in the lives of most people, and unless it provides the reassurance of successful participation in a meaningful activity it will leave the individual with a large gap in his life-pattern. Whether adequate satisfaction in life can be achieved without a good adjustment to the work situation is very doubtful indeed.

## People and Jobs

But even if we could sort out people into the jobs for which they are best suited, what are we going to do with

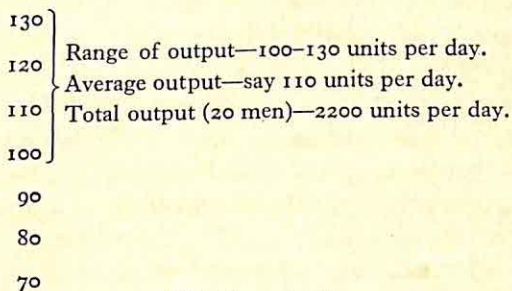


FIG. 1.



Haphazard allocation.

FIG. 2.



Effective selection.

those who are below average in their present jobs? Are they to suffer because they are slower than the best workers? Decidedly not. Rather the reverse, in fact, because jobs make such varied demands on the people who do them. Some call for strong men, and some need brains. But in others, curiously enough, the strong active man is at a disadvantage, while the rather stupid person is actually more likely to succeed than his more intelligent fellow. The variety is infinite, quite as great as the differences between people.

The man who is below average in one job, therefore, is not necessarily any worse, *as a man*, than the others. He is simply in the job where his particular endowment of abilities and attributes does not fit very well with what the work requires. If he is moved to another task which calls for the sort of qualities he does possess he may well turn out to be one of the best in the place.

Complete information about all the jobs in this country does not exist at the moment, and we have no means of knowing exactly what qualities each one requires. We know a certain amount about the attributes of individuals and how they are distributed throughout the population, but whether these attributes match up with what all the jobs require there is no means of knowing. There are indications, however, of a fairly close correspondence.

What is abundantly clear, however, is that very many people are in the wrong job. Their output is low, and they suffer from a continual feeling of defeat because they cannot make a satisfactory adjustment to their work. This is a source of economic and human waste which we cannot afford at a time when industrial productivity and social cohesion are so vital in this country. If these misfits could be given a chance, a start would be made on the larger problem.

## Practical Realities

We cannot, of course, begin moving large numbers of people out of their present jobs and into others. Even though the second job were a more suitable one, the large-scale dislocation that ensued would outweigh any advantage that might accrue. Change must be gradual. Are there any opportunities, within the bounds of practical realities, for ensuring that people move into jobs for which they are more suited and away from those for which they are less suited?

Our labour force in this country numbers some twenty-odd millions, and there are indications that the overall labour turnover is not less than 25 per cent. At a conservative estimate, then, there must be something over 5,000,000 changes of job in the course of a year, and each of these presents an opportunity for a move into a more suitable type of work. If a substantial number of these opportunities were seized it would not be long before a significant proportion of people moved at least in the right direction. At the same time a complete age group moves into employment each year from the schools and other educational establishments. The first job of these new entrants may be decisive for the rest of their working life. If it is a suitable one they may begin a career of success and satisfaction. If not, they may begin a drift from one near-failure to another, with all the waste and dissatisfaction that that may cause.

An opportunity is presented for improving the adjustment of an individual to his work every time anyone is taken into employment. Such opportunities are cropping up in hundreds every day in the normal working of industry and commerce. To whom are these opportunities presented?



Whenever a new employee is taken on someone makes a decision. It may be an Employment Officer, it may be a foreman or it may be a clerk in the Labour Office; but in saying, "All right you can start. Come in to-morrow and ask for Mr. Jones," someone decides on the allocation of a particular individual to a particular job.

If that decision is a good one the individual will find himself in a job for which he has the capacity, in which he can take an interest, and from which he will derive satisfaction. In due course he will become an efficient and happy member of the team. If the decision is a bad one the individual will find himself in unsuitable work. He will be below the average of his workmates in output and quality of work, he will be vaguely dissatisfied with himself and his job. Indeed, at the worst he may be acutely irritable, resentful of his surroundings, and a nuisance to those about him.

### **The Aim of this Book**

Good decisions are based on knowledge. If the person who makes the decision knows what the job requires on the one hand, and what the new man is fitted for on the other, he will have little difficulty in matching them up. The purpose of the following pages is to show how jobs can be studied so as to find out the kind of person who is likely to do them well; and further, how individuals can be assessed in such a way as to provide a complete picture of their potentialities and personal qualities.

The thesis is that people who are concerned with the engagement of workers and staff can be trained in these



methods, so that when they are confronted with the problem of filling a vacancy or allocating an individual to a job, they will make a right decision based on knowledge and understanding.

But perhaps more important than the allocation of new starters to the right job is the selection of those who will take charge of them. The effectiveness of the working group and the standard of team spirit within it depends in large measure on the foreman or charge-hand. Not everyone has the personal qualities which encourage others to work well together, but the morale and the efficiency of industry depend on having such people in the supervisory or managerial positions. The foregoing considerations, therefore, apply with equal force to selection for promotion.

At a time like the present when our survival depends on achieving maximum production from a limited working force with our existing capital equipment, it is imperative that everyone should be in the job where he can make his maximum contribution to our industrial effort. It is no use pleading shortage of labour as an excuse for unsystematic methods. Proper allocation is even more important than in a period of substantial unemployment, for without it the proportion who go from job to job spending a short period in each, during which they do no good to themselves or the firm, will grow larger and larger. When there are few to pick and choose among we cannot afford to make mistakes.

The happiness of the individual, however, is more important than his productive efficiency. Good industrial relations cannot be built among people who are ill-adjusted to their jobs, nor can such people achieve satisfactory lives as individuals. The prevalence of these maladjustments is part of the malaise of our times,

and better allocation may help to dispel it and thus make some contribution to industrial peace. It can make a still greater and more significant contribution to the sum of human happiness, however, in the lives of thousands of individual people.

## SUMMARY

1. There are wide variations in output and quality of work among people employed to do the same job.

2. Some people are happier in their work than others, the differences often linking up with their ability to do the job well.

3. When allocation is done haphazardly a few people get into jobs they like and can do very well, and a few into work they can make no shape at and which irritates them profoundly. Most people fall somewhere between.

4. If we could put everyone into a job that suits him then :

- (a) We should get better production,
- (b) People would be happier at work.

5. The man who is little good at one job may turn out to be very good at another.

6. People are constantly moving in and out of jobs, and each move provides an opportunity for a change in the right direction.

7. Whether the move is in the right or the wrong direction depends on the man who makes the decision to engage the individual.

8. Systematic methods of studying the requirements of jobs and assessing the potentialities of candidates enable that decision to be more often the right one.

## CHAPTER II

### AN OUTLINE OF THE PLAN

EMPLOYMENT interviewing is a matter of matching up people and jobs. In some cases we match the man to the job, and in others we match the job to the man. This is not always as simple as it sounds, because jobs and individuals make many different demands on each other.

Each kind of job, for example, presents a new situation. Some are carried on in the open air, and some indoors. Some involve heavy, fatiguing work and some call for sitting still all day. Some need quick thinking and some are routine and monotonous. There is no limit to the number of different ways in which people can earn a living. Every large city will illustrate this in the course of half-an-hour's walk, in which one may see men working pneumatic drills, girls showing off clothes, clerks adding up ledgers, drivers taking heavy vehicles through traffic, and so on in infinite variety.

No two of these jobs will make the same demands on the people who do them, nor will they offer the same satisfactions. The pneumatic drill job will call for a strong robust type of man and will give him the modest satisfaction of having done an honest day's work. The mannequin's job calls for a different kind of figure, and may give the satisfaction of being admired and envied. The ledger clerk's job calls for a different kind of person again and may give the satisfaction of white-collar respectability.



Our starting point, therefore, in matching up people and jobs must be a knowledge of what demands the work makes on the person who does it. We must have some idea of the kind of person who is likely to do it well. In other words we must know what we are looking for.

### **Attributes of the Individual**

But if jobs make different demands, so also do individuals vary one from the other in many different ways. We can lay down any number of scales and arrange our friends in order along them. There are, for example, fat ones and thin ones, nice ones and nasty ones, tall ones and short ones, clever ones and stupid ones, industrious ones and idle ones, and so on for as long as we care to continue.

While it is not difficult to grade a number of people according to any one of these scales—with, for example, the short ones at one end, the tall ones at the other, and those of average height in the middle—a complication at once arises when we realise that very few people will come in the same place on more than one scale. The short ones will not necessarily be stupid, below average in personal charm or less than usually hardworking and persistent. The very tall ones may well be below average in many other qualities. In fact any one individual may occupy a different place on several scales, below average in one, very much above in another and average in a third.

Confronted with this bewildering variety, how are we to recognise the kind of person we are looking for to fill any particular job? Just as we must have a method of finding out what the job requires, so must we have some way of summing up an individual and finding out what he can do best.

## The Need for Categories

We have, therefore, on the one hand a variety of jobs each of which demands different attributes, and on the other a series of individuals each distinct from his fellows in many different ways. How, then, are we to set about our problem of matching one with the other?

Our first need is a plan on which we can collect our ideas and arrange them in some kind of order. It is no use, for example, to decide that a particular job involves heavy fatiguing work, then to look at the candidate to see whether he has charming manners. We must keep the same kind of qualities together in our minds. If we are concerned with fatiguing work we must pay attention to the candidate's physical strength. His manners may be important, but in a different connection, and we may put off considering them until the appropriate moment.

Our plan, then, must provide us with a series of categories under which we can group all the attributes which any job may demand of the person who does it. Under the same plan we must be able to group all the qualities which we judge an individual candidate to possess. Unless the one plan is applicable to both the job and the individual, we may find ourselves laying down that the job requires good brains and a steady disposition and choosing candidates for their fair hair and pretty blue eyes. Such a confusion between the requirements of the job and the attributes of the candidate has been known to happen. It is due to a failure to keep different ideas in their proper places.

The seven-point plan of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology provides a series of categories which are applicable both to the requirements of the job and the qualities of the individual. First devised several

years ago by Mr. Alec Rodger, it was used in connection with the Institute's vocational guidance work. The same categories were found to be applicable in the selection of personnel for the Royal Navy and the Army during the war, while in industry the plan has proved useful in both higher grade and operative selection. Former editions of this book utilised this plan, but it has since become apparent that the seven points could be reduced to five with no great loss. It has also proved something of a limitation that no provision is made for different levels or scales under the seven points. In this edition, therefore, the Five-fold Grading will be used. Further explanation of it is given in Chapter VII, and a conversion table from the Seven-point Plan is shown on p. 96-7. The five categories are :

### **I. First Impression and Physical Make-up**

We start with what we see and hear of an individual in the first few minutes, thinking what the job requires in terms of outward appearance, manner, and speech, and also of its demands on the health, strength, and physical energy of the person who will do it well.

To deal first with the question of *appearance, speech, and manner*: some people create an agreeable impression straight away on others, because they have pleasant features, an attractive voice and manner, and are neatly turned out. Others make a poor impression at first glance, either because nature has endowed them poorly, or because they make little effort to acquire the kind of manner, speech or habits which appeal to other people. In certain jobs these differences are important. A salesman, for example, will have little chance of getting a hearing if he makes a poor initial impression, in fact in almost any job



which brings one in touch with the public, it is better for everyone if candidates are selected with some regard to their outward appearance and manner. There are plenty of jobs where this does not matter because they involve little or no contact with others. They can be kept for the unattractive and ill-mannered ones.

But there are other aspects of this heading. There is the straightforward question of the *physical strain* which the job involves. In a foundry, for example, the atmosphere tends to be hot, and at times very hot, with blinding streams of molten metal gushing suddenly out. Men have to do heavy physical work under these conditions, and maintain standards of considerable accuracy. Only those who are robust and healthy can stand up to the fatigue involved without falling sick or becoming careless and inattentive. When this is contrasted with, say, a draughtsman's job, where a man sits at a drawing board all day and lifts nothing heavier than a T-square, it becomes obvious that the two jobs present an entirely different picture from the point of view of the physical strain involved. Each job will make its own physical demands on the person who carries it out.

A third aspect of physique which can be important concerns *physical energy*. Some people give the impression of having inexhaustible stores of vigour and vitality such as require active, quick-tempo work to give it outlet. Others seem much slower, even sluggish, in their personal tempo, and are likely to do better in a job where things happen more slowly and there is less call for energy and speed.

From the point of view of the job and of the



individual, then, we can group together all that concerns his actual physical make-up under this heading. Appearance, speech and manner, health and general fitness are the main sub-headings, and these will provide the principal categories in which to arrange our thoughts.

## 2. Qualifications and Expectations

The second group of ideas concerns the standards which a candidate must already have reached to be suitable for the job. It deals mainly with matters of easily ascertainable fact, such as general education, specialised training, or work experience. There is also the question of the standards which the candidate himself expects to maintain.

In some jobs we must have a good standard of education if we are to be sufficiently familiar with the world in which we live, and with the means of communication—reading and writing—by which we convey and receive ideas from one to another. Thus for senior jobs we should regard the General Certificate of Education as essential, in the hope that a few years at a Secondary Grammar School would provide what is required. Other jobs of a mainly practical, routine nature may give little scope for these arts, and anyone who has completed a school curriculum up to the normal leaving age will be suitable from this point of view. Different standards of *general education* therefore may be laid down for different jobs.

Over and above this, of course, there is the question of *specialised training*. Most technical jobs have definite standards of competence, usually signified by specific examinations and certificates. One

would not engage an engineer, for example, unless he had gained Ordinary or Higher National Certificate in the relevant subjects. In some cases even a university degree might be considered as the minimum standard. Each trade and profession has its appropriate qualifications, some well established and universally recognised, some of more recent growth and less widely accepted. It is not difficult to specify the level required or to find out whether the candidate has reached it.

But in some jobs education and training are not enough. The candidate must have done the work and taken the responsibility for it before he can be considered. This brings us to the question of *relevant experience*, and again we may find it necessary to specify minimum standards—one year, three years—in a position of equivalent responsibility. It would be ill-advised, for example, to put someone in charge of the personnel function in a large factory, unless he had at least two years experience of the working of a personnel department.

All this concerns the past, what the candidate should actually have done, what examinations he should have passed and what positions he has held. But we must also think of the future and consider what he expects to achieve in his working life.

No mention has yet been made of wages, though everyone with experience in industry must know that they are a most important element in satisfaction with the job. But an experienced person will also know that, while there is a point below which dissatisfaction rises rapidly, above that point workers are quite willing to admit that they are earning good money. This point varies from job to job and

from person to person. What accounts for the difference?

Each one of us has been brought up to consider certain standards suitable for us. Some think they are doing pretty well with a steady job which brings in about six pounds a week. Others feel they are doing rather badly with only £1,000 a year. It depends largely on what we have been used to. If we are brought up to consider the sort of house, clothes and food one can afford for six pounds a week quite normal and comfortable, we shall be satisfied, or many of us will, with that income. But if we have been brought up in well-to-do surroundings, with every comfort and luxury, we shall find it difficult to shake off the feeling that we are "roughing it" in a suburban housing estate.

The same conditions apply to the social prestige which attaches to different jobs. If all our friends and relations are casual labourers we shall consider it quite an achievement to get a job with the Corporation even if it involves going round with a dust cart. But the boy with an artisan background, whose father is, say, a toolmaker, would consider himself degraded by anything below a craftsman's job.

We must take the background circumstances into consideration when we match people with jobs. A single man may not mind where he goes and may be willing to travel. A married man has to think of his family and his first consideration may be whether he can find accommodation for them, or whether he has to run two homes and travel between. These are simple and obvious points. But behind them is this question of the level of income and social prestige which the job has to offer, and which the candidate



expects to be able to maintain for himself and his family. Unless we attempt to match these up we shall find that people are dissatisfied and unhappy as soon as the novelty of the new job has worn off.

### 3. Brains and Abilities.

It is not uncommon for a good workman, steady, hard-working and experienced, to be promoted to supervisor and to fail entirely to grasp the slightly more complex issues with which the new job presents him. What has gone wrong when a firm thus loses a good workman and gains a bad supervisor?

The answer is that the man has been taken out of his intellectual depth and put into a job for which he lacks the mental equipment. Some people are "quick on the uptake", and see the point of a new situation quickly and accurately; they are never puzzled for long either in a work situation or in their leisure pursuits. It is only people like these who can deal successfully with jobs which involve assimilating complicated instructions or making decisions on a wide basis of information. If a slower person is put into such a job, with the best will in the world he will not be able to make much of it.

For the slower-working mind there are plenty of jobs which involve working to a rule and producing a standard result by prescribed methods. Work like this easily becomes tedious and boring to the quick-witted, but for the right person it is reassuring and gives him an agreeable feeling of competence and security. Indeed for the very dull, stupid person there are some repetitive jobs in industry which seem at first glance almost inhuman in their monotony, but which are of the greatest service in

enabling him to earn a living on level terms with other people.

Once more we have a scale along which people vary, that of quick intelligence, through mediocrity to intellectual backwardness. It is possible to place any job approximately on this scale, and by choosing people within the appropriate limits to match them up with work of the right level. By paying attention to this aspect of people's make-up we shall avoid failures on the one hand and boredom and frustration on the other. But it is important to remember that this is only one aspect. There are others of equal significance.

In manual jobs the old hands can often pick out a newcomer who will be easy to train after watching him at work for a short time. The neatness of movement and manipulative dexterity from which the skill is developed may show itself in the first few minutes, whereas the person who appears clumsy and "butter-fingered" may be marked down as a slow learner from the early stages.

Facility with words, quickness at figures, mechanical aptitude and the like, these show themselves in varying degrees among different people. In most cases their possession enables the individual to develop the appropriate skill quickly and with certainty. Thus, if we find a boy who is naturally quick and accurate at figures, he will tend quickly to acquire the skill in arithmetic which enters into the book-keeping, accounting or banking types of work. If we find a fluent young man who is never stuck for the right word and who talks confidently and easily, it will not be difficult to train him as a demonstrator or a salesman. Likewise, the boy who

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is quick at gadgets and who understands how things work will be well suited for training in the mechanical side of an engineer's job.

There is a limited number of such "special abilities", or pre-dispositions to acquire certain kinds of skill, which can be recognised and estimated with reasonable accuracy. They include verbal fluency, quickness at figures, the perception of spatial relations, mechanical understanding, manipulative ability and musical ability. Some types of work call for certain of these abilities more than others, and entrants who are selected with them in view will prove much quicker and easier to train.

#### 4. Motivation

It is important also to think of what an individual likes doing and how hard he is likely to try at it. Each one of us can probably call out a great deal of energy and enthusiasm for at least one kind of activity. Some enjoy the society of others and will take time and trouble to engage in social activities. Some prefer to collect new ideas and devote their time to extending their intellectual experience by reading. Others again prefer an active life and seek out games or county pursuits on their weekends, while to some people the satisfaction they gain from making things and working with their hands exceeds that from other leisure pursuits.

Each of these is an "interest-pattern". The first one might be called *social*, the second *intellectual*, the third *physically-active*, and the last *practical-constructive*. They provide a rough series of categories into which we can classify the kind of things an individual likes to do and tends to seek out in pre-



ference to others. With many people it is found that the things they like doing fall fairly definitely into one or more of these classifications; in other words their interests have a fairly specific direction.

Now certain kinds of work match up very closely with these interest patterns. The job of a salesman, for example, provides plenty of scope for meeting people and talking to them, while many engineering or wood-working jobs provide the satisfaction of making things. Most professional jobs have a marked intellectual element, while soldiering or country pursuits provide an outlet for the physically active. Once we look at a job from this point of view we can decide the kind of interests it will satisfy, and match it up with the kind of person who looks for these satisfactions.

There are of course some jobs which appear to hold very little interest for anyone because they involve nothing but monotonous and boring routine work. But there are quite a number of people whose interests remain on a very unadventurous and conventional level and who demand only modest satisfactions. If we think also of the level of people's interest-patterns we shall have little difficulty in finding those who are quite happy in such jobs.

## 5. Adjustment

Jobs call for different levels of responsibility. Some involve taking charge of others or looking after expensive equipment and materials. In these a moment's inattention or an error of judgment may have disastrous consequences. In others there is constant supervision, little responsibility and no chance to make more than a minor mistake.

The former will call for someone who can be trusted to carry out his duties with little supervision even in the face of distractions and difficulties. Such a person must be steady and reliable and capable of pursuing a consistent line of conduct. For the latter a more ordinary kind of person will suffice because there is someone at hand to look after him. Again some jobs call for the ability to get on well with others, and at times to exert some influence over them. Certain people of equable disposition are capable of remaining calm and courteous at all times and have little difficulty in gaining the confidence and respect of their associates. These acceptable people will be well able to take their place in a team and at times to take the lead without sacrificing the co-operation and good feeling which exists among the group. The three-cornered, awkward kind of people will be better off in jobs where they work mainly on their own and do not have others depending on them.

Qualities like these are dealt with under the heading of Adjustment, and here the problem is to keep our feet firmly on the ground among somewhat elusive concepts. It is fatally easy to multiply a list of abstract nouns like "co-operation", "initiative", "sense of humour", "sociability", "integrity" and the like, without being entirely clear as to what each one really means. In practice it has been found most satisfactory to stick to a small number of distinct qualities such as *steadiness or reliability*, *acceptability to others* and *influence over others*. " Looking at the job with these in mind we can ask ourselves what kind of *role* it involves among other people. Does it involve heavy responsibility, does



other people's work depend on it, will a small mistake have serious results? If so, it calls for someone who is above average steady and reliable, because only such qualities in an individual will enable him to sustain a role like that successfully among others. Similarly with a job which depends on working easily with others or taking the lead among them.

### The Use of the Five-fold Grading

So much for the plan. It provides us with five main categories under which we can group the attributes of individuals. None of these categories is quite distinct and separate from the others because, of course, we cannot cut up a human being and arrange the pieces in five different boxes—not, at least, if we expect him to be much good for anything afterwards. Any individual must be considered as a whole because in the last resort he is one and indivisible.

What the plan provides is a framework of five different viewpoints from which it is convenient to look at an individual in turn. When we are standing at the one labelled *First Impression and Physical Make-up* we are seeing his outward appearance, his speech and manner, his health and general fitness. We move on to the point labelled *Qualifications and Expectations* and we think of his general education, specialised training, and work experience, and also of the kind of home he hopes to keep up and the social and financial level of job that this will demand. Next we stand at *Brains and Abilities* and consider the complexity of work he is likely to cope with successfully and his ability to acquire certain skills quickly and easily. Further round we stand at *Motivation* and spend some time considering the kind of things he likes doing and how willingly he will work at a practical,



intellectual, social, or physically active job. Then we move to the point labelled *Adjustment* and think of the kind of role he is capable of playing successfully among other people, whether it be one that calls for qualities of steadiness or reliability, acceptability, or influence over others.

By now we have walked all round the individual we are considering, and have looked at him from every angle. We may not be able to reduce our impressions to a simple grading on a rating scale, but we should have a pretty fair idea of the whole man. It may take a little time also to sort our ideas out, but this is not to be wondered at when we stop to think what a complex picture even the simplest human being presents.

Now as was said at the beginning of this chapter, this plan must serve two purposes. In the first place we want it to describe the person we are looking for to do a particular job, and in the second we want it to sum up the potentialities of the candidates we may be considering. Needless to say, it will do neither of these things by itself.

### **The Arranging of Information**

It does provide us, however, with a common means of arranging our information on these two subjects.

In the first place when we go and look at a job and consider the duties it involves, the conditions under which it is done, the rewards it offers and the satisfactions it may provide, we can build up a picture of the kind of person who would be successful and satisfied in it. This picture will be in terms of our five categories, each point being sustained by what we have seen at the place where the actual work is done. We may want a big strong man *because* he must lift heavy weights throughout the working

day. We may want a reasonably pleasant girl *because* she has to serve customers all day long. Each quality we require in the individual must be justified by the actual circumstances of the job.

In this way we shall emerge with a specification of the kind of person we are looking for. It will be objective because it is based on adequate evidence from the work-situation, and it will be accurate because it is systematically arranged in recognisable categories. Such a *job-specification* is the starting point in any selection scheme. It is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter VIII.

When we turn to summing up an individual we are confronted with the same process of assembling information and arranging it in our five categories. When did he leave school and what exams has he passed? Did he serve an apprenticeship and attend evening classes? What jobs has he done and what experience has he gained? Such questions are the raw material for our Qualifications category, and the four others must be filled up by observation, by questioning and by other means which we shall deal with in the following chapters.

In this way we build up an *Assessment* of the individual candidate in the same series of categories as our job specification. Now the matching-up process has been simplified to the straight comparison of one with the other. If they fit we have found the man we are looking for. If they don't we must either try to find another candidate who does fit the specification, or we must fit our candidate into another job.

But if the worst comes to the worst, as indeed it often does these days, and we must put a candidate into an unsuitable job, we shall at least know what we are doing. We can balance the importance of filling the job against the likelihood that the man will be unsuitable, dissatisfied, and

will leave within a month ; or we can take him on in the hope that we can move him on to something more suitable as soon as the right man does turn up. Either way we shall have some grip on the situation, and if we do have a high labour turnover we shall at least know why.



## SUMMARY

1. In matching up people and jobs we must know :
  - (a) What we are looking for.
  - (b) What a particular individual can do.
2. This calls for some kind of plan on which we can arrange an individual's attributes.
3. Such a system of categories is provided by the Five-fold Grading, which includes :
  - (a) *First Impression and Physical Make-up*: appearance, speech and manner, health and general fitness.
  - (b) *Qualifications and Expectations*: General education, specialised training and work experience, and the standards of income and prestige aspired to.
  - (c) *Brains and Abilities*: the capacity for complex and intricate mental work and the predisposition to acquire certain types of skill.
  - (d) *Motivation*: the liking for certain types of work and the standards of effort to be expected.
  - (e) *Adjustment*: the ability to undertake a role which involves steadiness or reliability, acceptability to, or influence over others.
4. Such a plan provides five different points of view from which we can look at an individual. They are interdependent, and at times they overlap.
5. When considering a job we can arrange our job-

*specification* of the person likely to be successful and satisfied in it on these categories.

6. When considering an individual we can arrange our *assessment* on the same categories.

7. The matching-up process is thus simplified to a straight comparison of one with the other.



### CHAPTER III

## THE COLLECTION OF FACTS

THE great charm about fortune-telling is that it does away with the tedious process of assembling evidence and drawing logical inferences from it. Cross the gypsy's palm with silver and she will tell you the future; a glance at your hand or a look in the crystal being all the information she needs. The pity is that there are not more gypsies; for most of us are constantly trying to predict the future without taking time to understand the past.

Unfortunately the gypsy is sometimes wrong or the crystal ball is cloudy, so we are thrown back on more pedestrian and time-consuming methods. These prove more reliable in the long run provided we play the game according to the rules and don't try to take short cuts.

We hear a great deal nowadays about "Scientific Management", in fact the word "scientific" has come to be a term of great prestige, lending tone to anything with which it is coupled. But what exactly does the word mean, and what is the essential characteristic of scientific method? It all started many years ago when Francis Bacon suggested that if anyone wanted to advance "Natural Knowledge" he had better start by having a look at what actually happens in Nature.

Briefly, what we mean by scientific method comes down to three simple stages.

*First.* We go and look at the facts, taking care to assemble all that seem obviously relevant, and any that might possibly be relevant. We make sure also that our



facts really are facts, and not what we or someone else would like to think happened if we had only been there.

*Secondly.* We try to find a possible explanation which will fit the facts. Such possible explanations are called hypotheses, and we must juggle around with several until we find the one which seems to put all the facts we have together most coherently and completely.

*Thirdly.* We use our hypothesis to try to predict the future. That is to say, we take a certain situation and put forward our possible explanation of it. Then we say: "If our explanation is correct this is what will happen next." If it does so every time, then we can be sure that our explanation is the right one and that we really understand the situation. If it doesn't then we must go back one stage and try another hypothesis.

In the long run it is only a method like this that really produces results. There are, of course, the inspired guesses where someone hits on the right hypothesis by luck in the early stages, and there are quite a number of people with quick, efficient minds who can pass through the fact-collecting and hypothesis-juggling stages with great rapidity and accuracy. But every time a right answer is produced, something approximating to this method has been utilised.

### **Facts about the Job**

As we said in the last chapter, any selection scheme must start with an adequate job-specification, with a clear idea of what we are looking for. This must be based on a foundation of facts about the job, and these facts must be collected from the actual point at which the job is done, the factory or shop floor, the retail counter, the warehouse or office.

Collecting facts in such places is not always as easy as

it sounds. There are a lot of fairy-tales in circulation about particular jobs, beliefs which are held with great tenacity by those who appear to know, and which cannot be shaken without raising some hostility. Many of these concern the time it takes to learn a job, such as, for example, that it takes three generations to make a good weaver, or that several years making the tea, and standing by an automatic machine in an engineering shop will turn a boy into a good craftsman. More efficient training methods have shown the defects in these beliefs, particularly in recent years, but they are still held faithfully in some quarters.

A good deal of determined brushing-aside of irrelevancies is necessary before we can get close to what really happens at the working point. Once there, the aim should be to express as much as possible in quantitative terms. For example, if a job is said to involve lifting heavy weights several times a day, we should try to establish how heavy the actual weights are in pounds, how far they have to be lifted or carried, and how many times this occurs during the normal day's work.

The results of this are sometimes surprising. Some well-known "heavy jobs" have been found to involve only a small amount of really strenuous work, and in fact can be done by a disabled person provided one of his mates gives a hand only once or twice during the day. On the other hand some jobs done by women are found, when examined objectively, to involve lifting nearly a hundred-weight from floor to counter several times an hour. This would put them into a category of physical strain and fatigue which would be rather surprising when compared with certain jobs done by men.

We shall be dealing at greater length with the subject in Chapter VIII. Here it is only necessary to stress the



fact that an adequate job-specification depends on the patient collection of facts about the job.

### **Facts about the Individual**

In the same way, fortune-telling apart, an adequate assessment of the individual depends on the collection of facts about him. In a House of Lords debate a member recalled Lord Hirst once saying to him "I know when a man comes through the door if he is my man." We really must make an effort to grow out of this kind of thinking, because it has already been proved to have no kind of foundation in fact. Whenever these so-called good judges of men have been checked for accuracy they have been proved to have little agreement among themselves, much less any consistent ability to predict future performance. For example, during the war a number of senior officers were invited to interview twenty candidates and rank them in order of suitability for commissions. Some candidates were ranked first by one judge and twentieth by another! Only by a strenuous forgetting of failures, and a careful cossetting of doubtful cases can this illusion of "spotting them as they come through the door" be preserved.

If, on the other hand, we take the time to assemble factual information about an individual, we at least have a basis on which to build a hypothesis about his future performance. The process will inevitably take a little time and thought, and this is probably one reason why so many people are unwilling to set about it patiently and systematically.

There is, however, no other way to be certain that we really know about an individual, and the first stage in the assessment process is the collection of facts. Some of these will be quite straightforward and simple, and the



quickest and easiest way to deal with them is by asking a candidate to put them down on paper, in other words, to fill up a form.

### **The Application Form**

One half of the country nowadays spends a lot of its time filling in forms drawn up by the other, and a deep enmity exists between the two halves. Those who are presented with a form to fill up immediately complain about bureaucracy and red-tape. Those who have to work with the completed forms complain that the others can't even answer the simplest questions in plain English.

Now Heaven forbid that we should add to unnecessary paper work in industry or anywhere else, but it really does seem quite fair to ask a candidate for a job to put down a few details about himself on paper, provided that the form we use is simple and properly designed. Of course, if we give him a long complicated document which is full of personal questions whose relevance to the job is not apparent, we cannot blame the candidate for getting irritated. If we stick to the following simple rules, and remember the grade of person who has to use the form, we shall not go far wrong.

*First.* The questions should be obviously relevant to the job in hand. Very few people indeed will object to putting down the facts about the jobs they have done in the past or giving details of their technical training, for the vast majority will agree that it is perfectly reasonable for a future employer to want to know these things. It is when we come to questions like "Were both your parents British subjects?" "What is your father's occupation?" or "What is your religion?" that the candidate begins to ask himself "What is the point of all this?" From there it is only a short step to a disgruntled "What

FIG. 3.  
*Personal History Sheet*

SURNAM <sup>1</sup> (BLOCK CAPITALS) :		CHRISTIAN NAMES :		TEL. NO.
ADDRESS :		WEIGHT :		SINGLE/ENGAGED/MARRIED
AGE :		HEIGHT :		NUMBER OF CHILDREN :
MEDICAL HISTORY :				
(Disability, serious illness, operations, etc.)				
GENERAL EDUCATION : Name of school, colleges or universities attended	Dates	Scholarships won : examinations passed ; degrees and diplomas gained, with subjects taken	Dates	
PROFESSIONAL OR TECHNICAL TRAINING : Apprenticeships, pupilships, etc., Technical college or evening institutes attended	Courses and/or Subjects studied	Diplomas, Certificates, Membership of professional bodies, etc.	Dates	

FIG. 3.—*continued.*

## WAR SERVICE :

Arm or Branch of Service :

Method of Entry :

Date of Entry :

Rank on Entry :

Date of Release :

Rank on Release :

Ranks held

Typical responsibilities in ranks held, appointments, campaigns, and other details of service

Dates

1.

2.

3.

## AWARDS OR DECORATIONS :

INTERESTS AND SPARE TIME ACTIVITIES : e.g., games played, membership of clubs, societies, religious bodies, etc., preferences in cinema, theatre, reading, B.B.C. programmes, etc.

Offices or other positions held in any of these clubs, etc.



FIG. 3.—*continued.*

## PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

	DATES	EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS	TYPE OF BUSINESS	POSITION HELD WITH NUMBERS OF STAFF UNDER CONTROL	ACTUAL DUTIES (GIVE FAIRLY FULL DETAILS)	SALARY	REASONS FOR LEAVING
Present position :							
Previous positions in order back to first position							

right have they to pry into my affairs?" This attitude of mind was neatly put in a recent *Spectator* article. "The Post-Master General is curious. Before he will let you help deliver the Christmas mail, he requires full details of your past, your health and your mother's birthplace." \*

*Next* it should ask specific and direct questions. Mere headings such as "Give details of your military service" may elicit more information in one case than another. It is not unknown under such a heading for one man to put down that he was conscribed into the Army in 1943, went through preliminary training, then RAOC training as a storeman, and so on through a long list of postings with details of his very humble duties in various depots in England, finishing up with promotion to the rank of lance-corporal. Another man may have enlisted in the R.A.F. as an AC2, and finished up as a Wing Commander, with two tours of operations in heavy bombers, several detached commands, one period as senior instructor and another with the United States Army Air Force, and been decorated with the DSO and two DFCs. His entry under this heading may be "R.A.F. 1939-46." If we are really to get useful details about the candidate's military service, always provided that we consider them relevant to the job, we must put down specific questions on the form (reproduced on p. 40).

This will at least ensure that we have the same amount of information about each candidate.

*Thirdly* it should be designed for the type of person who will have to fill it up. Candidates for an important job, many of whom have university or higher technical training, will be quite prepared to fill up two foolscap pages,

\* "Plain Clothes Postman": Alan Donnelly. *Spectator*, 31 Dec. 1948

## NATIONAL SERVICE.

What arm of the Service were you in? .....  
 What was the date of your enlistment? ..... and  
 release?..... What was your rank on entering? .....  
 and on your release? ..... Give details of three  
 typical appointments you have held

RANK	DATES	BRIEF OUTLINE OF DUTIES	NUMBER OF MEN UNDER COMMAND
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....

or even more, with written information. For them the form shown in Fig. 3 will be quite suitable. But if you present a candidate for a hourly-paid job who left school at fourteen with such a document, you may bewilder and irritate him. For him something much simpler is needed, and it may be advisable for the receptionist in the waiting room to be available to give a little help, or even to fill it up for him.

**How Far are such Forms Useful?**

No application form will tell the whole story by itself. It can only be a means of assembling the simpler items of factual information about a candidate in a convenient and concise manner. When a large number of candidates have to be sorted out quickly and reduced to a manageable number for interview, they can usually be screened in this way. In many cases it will be quite obvious from the form that they lack the essential qualifications and experience and can be discarded out of hand.

Apart from cases like this, however, the application form serves merely as the starting point of an interview.



Each item will have to be supplemented verbally by the candidate, and the stark outline on the paper filled out and brought to life in conversation. If this is necessary why trouble with an application form at all?

Principally because these forms save time. A few seconds reading over a form will show the interviewer the main lines of the candidate's background, and will indicate what is likely to be irrelevant and commonplace, and what may be important enough to justify spending some time discussing. The interview must be central to the selection process, and the time spent on it is valuable. It is important to make the best use of every moment when one is face to face with the candidate.

Fact-collecting, then, can be simplified by the use of an application form, but it depends essentially on observation and questioning in the interview. What kind of facts are we looking for and what do they tell us?

### **Facts about First Impression and Physical Make-up**

Reverting to our five-fold grading, we laid down that in the job-specification we should want certain standards of physical health, outward appearance and energy. Information under this heading is very largely factual.

For example, if we know a candidate's height and weight, how often he has been absent from work in the last year, and what sort of work he has been doing, we are on the way to knowing something about his physical health. We might supplement this by finding out whether he has any disabilities, and how often and from what complaints he has suffered. From these facts we can probably say whether he seems fit and strong and up to the standards we have laid down. At this point, however, the layman had better stop, or if he wants to work to any finer limits he should call in a medical man, and ask him to draw up a

detailed professional specification of the health standards required, and to conduct the medical examinations for them.

The other aspect of this heading, that of the first impression a candidate makes on the public, is largely a matter of observation. We can usually tell at a glance whether a candidate is well-built, has agreeable features and well-co-ordinated movements. We can also decide whether he is well-turned-out from such details as personal cleanliness, and neatness in the matter of hair, shoes and the like. Suitability in dress is probably a matter in which the personal preferences of the interviewer tend to make themselves felt, but most people could probably agree on the kind of turnout which should be classified in such simple categories as "flashy", "business-like", or "slovenly".

By listening to a candidate for a few minutes we can decide whether he speaks correctly, or whether he makes mistakes in grammar or phrasing. During this time any local inflexions will make themselves heard, or any mannerisms or affectations which might prove irritating. We can also decide whether his manner is friendly and confident, or whether he shows a lack of poise, either by awkwardness or diffidence, or by over-confidence and self-assertion. From all these observations, which are very largely, if not entirely, factual, we can assess the kind of effect our candidate is likely to have on other people when they meet him.

Lastly, under this heading, our observation will tell us something about a candidate's personal tempo. Some people have a liveliness of movement and gesture, and an air of vitality which suggests physical vigour and energy. Others betray by their sluggish movements and lackadaisical manner that they lack the energy and physical drive which some kinds of job call for.



## Facts about Qualifications

To know that a candidate left school at seventeen tells us little or nothing. To know that he sat School Certificate at 16, and gained Matriculation Exemption with four Credits and two Distinctions tells us a great deal. When we can add to this the subjects he took we shall have a pretty complete picture of his standard of general education up to that age.

Perhaps none of the five points depends so much on factual information as that labelled Qualifications, and in few other cases is it so easy to collect. Educational standards can usually be expressed quite simply in terms of examinations passed, and this applies also to formal technical or specialised training. It is necessary, of course, that the interviewer should know what the various standards mean, and should not confuse the Higher School Certificate with the Higher National Certificate or the Higher Leaving Certificate in Scotland. Broadly speaking, however, the General Certificate of Education, ordinary, advanced, or scholarship levels, cover most aspects of Secondary Grammar School education in England, and it does not take long to become familiar with the system of levels and Distinctions used, though the Matriculation Exemptions granted by different Universities introduce a minor complication. The standards of technical or trade training are more complex, but can soon be understood in terms of National, Higher National, or the various City and Guilds certificates.

Getting at the facts of previous work experience is more difficult and demands some familiarity on the part of the interviewer with different kinds of industrial work. If he knows something about engineering he will have a fair idea of what a man has been doing if he says he was on a



lathe. By additional questions such as "Was it a centre-lathe or a capstan?" "Did you set it yourself?" "Was it an automatic?" he will be able to form quite a precise idea of the skill and responsibility involved.

We want to get as near as possible to what the candidate has actually been doing, and questions must be designed to encourage him to talk of the actual circumstances of his work. Patience and experience can usually elicit the required information, even when the candidate has been engaged on the more abstruse jobs like that of a "holder-on", "a tackler" or "a tenter". The length of time spent in each job, the circumstances under which he left, whether he was in charge of others or responsible for machines and equipment—it is only on facts like these that sound knowledge of a candidate's work-history can be based.

### **Facts about Expectations**

The more facts we have about his life-history, the better we shall know a candidate. Quite apart from the simple and obvious issues of whether he is married, whether he can travel, or where he lives, there are questions of the standards of life he has been used to and his levels of expectation both in money and social position.

We must find out, then, something about his home background, where he was born, what his father did for a living, and which part of the town he lived in. This will show what he has been used to and what he will expect of life. Then again we must know whether he has kept up to the standard from which he started, or if he has, by his own efforts, gained some advancement and improved his position. It is only in this way that we shall know what he has made of his life and what his life has made of him.

We shall be dealing in Chapter IX with the importance of previous history in the assessment of an individual. Here it is only necessary to stress that our knowledge of previous history depends entirely on facts about home-life, facts about school records, facts about work experience and facts about interests. Inference and interpretation have their place in the assessment process, but they come in after the facts have been assembled, and they are no substitute for them.

## SUMMARY

1. The Scientific method depends on three stages :—

- (a) the collection of facts,
- (b) casting about for a possible explanation of them, and
- (c) checking that explanation by trying it out.

2. Good selection methods must also start with the collection of facts.

3. We want, first, facts about the work and the circumstances in which it is done, on which to base our job-specification.

4. We want, next, facts about the individual on which to base our assessment.

5. An application form is a convenient means for assembling the essentials, provided :—

- (a) the questions asked are relevant to the job,
- (b) they are specific and direct,
- (c) the form is designed for the type of person who is to fill it in.

6. Although they will have to be supplemented at a personal interview, these forms can save valuable time.

7. By collecting facts about First Impression we can make a fairly complete assessment of a candidate under this heading.

8. The same applies to Qualifications and Expectations.

9. Our interpretation of a candidate's life history will depend almost entirely on knowing the facts about it.



## CHAPTER IV

### MEASURABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS

TOWARDS the end of last century people began to get interested in human measurements. "Anthropometrics" was the name given to these studies, and data began to be accumulated on such subjects as people's height, weight, colour of hair, chest-measurements and so on. It soon became apparent that there were some rather remarkable regularities in the way these measurements were distributed among large numbers of people of the same race and sex.

For example, when the heights of several thousand adult males were measured and arranged on a graph as in Fig. 4, they were found to give a fairly symmetrical distribution.

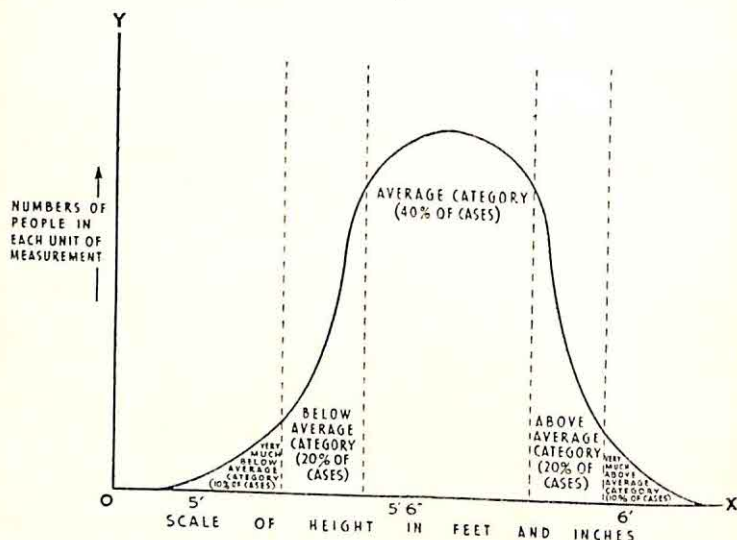
Most of the cases were grouped round the average height and a decreasing number were found to tail off above and below the average more or less symmetrically.

Similarly when the hair-colours of large numbers of people were studied the same picture was found. Most of the cases in this country were grouped round the medium brown shades, a few were rather fair, and a very few had straw-coloured, golden or "platinum blonde" hair. Likewise there were a few people who were darker than average and a very few who had jet-black hair. In fact if we change the measurements on the X axis of our graph from feet and inches to hair shades we shall get the same kind of curve. (Fig. 5.)

Anyone can check this for himself whenever he has the opportunity of observing a large number of people with their hats off. White hair and bald heads may be disregarded, of course.

By the turn of the century enough evidence had been gathered to make it quite clear that variations in

FIG. 4.

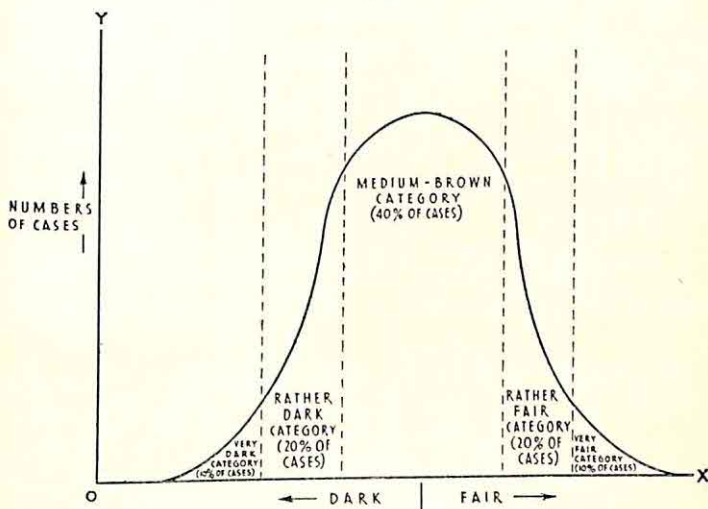


height, weight and so on were regularly distributed, provided, of course, that a large enough number was studied and that they were taken from a similar race and culture. If we stand outside Wellington Barracks and measure the height of adult males we shan't get a symmetrical distribution because we shall probably be including a disproportionate number of tall young guardsmen. Likewise, if we are studying the colour of people's hair we shall get misleading results if we include African

negroes, who are mostly dark, in the same group as Scandinavians who tend to be fair.

So long as the group contained the same kind of people, however, and so long as it was large enough, the same kind of picture emerged for most human measurements. A large number, say 40%, were grouped round

FIG. 5.



the average, a slightly smaller number, say 20% of the total, would be a little above the average and a similar number would be a little below. A smaller number again, say 10%, would be very much above average and a similar number would be very much below.

### Scales of Difference

So long as we stick to one thing at a time, it is not difficult to understand the differences between individuals. Take any single attribute, such as height, for example.



There will be one man who has this attribute to a maximum extent (among normal men the tallest may approach 6 feet 6 inches), and there will be someone who has it to the minimum (a man of 5 feet is about the shortest by normal standards). Between these there will be an average (the average height for men is about 5 feet 7½ inches), and round this average, individuals will be distributed symmetrically according to the curve shown on p. 48. This makes it possible to set up a scale of difference for that attribute. Worked out for the height of adult males, such a scale would be as follows :

A grade, or very much above average	Top	10%	6 feet and over
B grade, or above average	Next	20%	5 feet 9 inches to 6 feet
C grade, or average	Middle	40%	5 feet 6 inches to 5 feet 9 inches
D grade, or below average	Lower	20%	5 feet 3 inches to 5 feet 6 inches
E grade, or very much below average	Bottom	10%	5 feet 3 inches and under

With a standard unit of measurement like a foot or an inch, such a scale can be made very accurate. But there are other attributes of the individual which cannot be so measured. For these, descriptive scales can be set up, based on the same distribution. It is not usually difficult to describe the extremes, that is to say, those who have the quality to the maximum and minimum degrees. This will account for the A and E grades. Then we can describe the average or C grade, and lastly, those who are just above (B grade) and just below the average (D grade). Such scales will never be as accurate as those which can be expressed in inches or pounds and ounces, but they can be very useful in practical work. Since the end of last century, studies have been proceeding on these lines, many inspired by the work of the late Sir Francis Galton.

## Early Mental Measurements

At about the same time several attempts were being made to measure mental characteristics. The most important of these were in Paris in the early years of the century, where a physician named Binet was trying to sort out those children who could not make anything of the normal type of education in the ordinary schools. He tried various devices until he finally evolved a scale of simple questions which he asked of large numbers of children. These questions required little previous knowledge, the answers being quite obvious to any child who was normally quick and observant. For example, he asked them at the age of three to point to their nose, eyes and mouth, to repeat two digits, to enumerate the objects in a picture, give their family name and repeat a sentence of six syllables. At age four he asked them their sex, to name a key, a knife and a penny, to repeat three digits and to compare two lines.

Quite naturally, of course, the older children could answer more of these questions than the younger ones and so gained higher scores. That was to be expected. Whenever the scores of a number of children of the same age were studied, however, the same kind of distribution as described above began to appear. Most of the children in that age-group got an average score. A few got scores somewhat above average and a few got scores somewhat below. A very few got scores that were very much above average and a similar number got scores that were very much below. In fact the same kind of curve which had been found in the measurement of height, weight and so on, made its appearance.

This was a very remarkable and important discovery, for it meant that the rules of distribution which had been



found to obtain among tangible human measurements which could be expressed in inches or centimetres were coming to light among mental, intangible measurements also. It looked as though Binet's scale of simple little questions was measuring something which was distributed among the Paris school children in the same proportions as had already been established in regard to height, weight, hair colour and so on.

### **Further Research on Intelligence**

More than forty years have passed since Binet first experimented with his scale of questions, and millions of people have been subjected to tests of intelligence in the interval. The results of these have tended to establish the following broad conclusions :

We can draw up mental tasks which do not depend on previous knowledge or experience in such a way that people's performance on them may be expressed as a score, i.e. in terms of numbers of items completed in a given time. The rules for drawing up these tasks have become clearer as experience has been gained.

If we set such a task to a large number of people who live in the same place, talk the same language, and have the same background, their scores will tend to arrange themselves in the normal curve of distribution shown in Fig. 4. Conditions must, of course, be the same for all, and perhaps it is not really very surprising to find that most people get scores round about the average, a few just above or just below and a very few a good deal above or a good deal below.

What is surprising, however, is that if the same or a similar task is given again under like conditions after an interval, the same people will tend to get very similar scores. That is to say, most of those whose scores were



in the "very much above average" category the first time will be in the same category again, while those whose scores were "just above average", "average", "just below average" and so on will, in the majority of cases, fall into the same categories again on the second trial.

Thus when people are given these standardised mental tasks, which are called intelligence tests, they tend to get the same kind of score in relation to others every time. There is a slight complication, which we may note briefly, on account of age. The average score of children on such tasks tends to rise as they grow older, from birth to about sixteen. Thus a twelve-year-old child will get a higher score than an eight-year-old, simply because it is four years older. Within each age group, however, the scores are distributed according to a normal curve. Thus if we take a rather dull twelve-year-old, he may get a higher score than a bright eight-year-old. But when we compare this score with that of other twelve-year-old children we shall find it to be distinctly below the average for that age. In the same way the eight-year-old's score will be high in relation to those of other children of his age.

After the age of about sixteen, however, there is usually little or no gain in scores simply on account of age. Thus we can compare twenty-year-old people with thirty-year-olds on the same scale. In the higher age-groups, however, the average scores tend to fall a little.

### **What do High Scores on Intelligence Tests go With ?**

Now supposing we do succeed in putting the same people into "average", "above average", "below average" categories every time by means of an intelligence test, what is the practical significance of it? What does the ability to solve such problems mean in terms of real life?

If we try to find out about people in the various grades according to an intelligence test, we shall see that those in the higher categories tend to be rated as pretty "quick on the uptake" by friends or teachers, while those in the lower categories tend to be rated rather slow. This does not happen in every case, but it happens significantly more often than not.

Again, if we compare people's test category with the kind of education they can profit by, we shall find that only those in the "very much above average" category are able to do any good at a university course. We shall find that those in the "just above average" category can in most cases profit by a secondary grammar school education, and that those in the "average" and "just below average" categories do quite well at secondary modern schools, though some of the latter may have difficulty in getting into the top class. We shall also find that many of the "very much below average" class have difficulty in profiting by ordinary education at all, and are much better if given a special course in which everything is taken rather more slowly and simply. This categorisation can be done by giving children intelligence tests before they complete their education. We can be sure, then, that the score in the intelligence test is not merely the result of a person's education, but rather that the level of education he can profit by is the result of the same thing which determines his score on an intelligence test.

There is also a link-up between intelligence test scores and the kind of job a person can do successfully. If we were to test a large number of children on leaving school, and then find out twenty years later the kind of work they were doing, we should find that, with a few exceptions, those who fall into the "very much above average" category were in what most people would



recognise as "brainy" jobs—lawyers, doctors, scientists, higher executives in business and the like. Those who fall into the "just above average" category would be doing rather less brainy jobs, small tradesmen, junior executives, and occasionally a very highly skilled craftsman. The "average" category would be doing "average" jobs, skilled and semi-skilled, and the "just below average" would tend to be in the unskilled, labouring type of job. Many of the "very much below average" category would probably be having some difficulty in making a living in the rather complicated, present-day world, because they can only cope successfully with the very simplest routine kinds of work.

The score in an intelligence test, therefore, does seem to mean something in practical affairs. It links up with other estimates of an individual's ability to deal adequately with the problems which are presented to him by the circumstances of real life. Those who get high scores will tend to be rated as "quick on the uptake" by those who know them, will usually profit by higher education, and will tend to do well in jobs which most people regard as requiring "brains". Those who get low scores will tend to be thought rather dull mentally, will usually have difficulty in getting into higher classes in schools, and will tend to be found suitable only for the simpler kinds of work.

### **Cases where High Scores are not Borne out in Real Life**

You will perhaps have noticed that great care has been taken to say "in most cases", "usually", "will tend to be found in better jobs" in the foregoing section. This is necessary because the results of an intelligence test do not in every case link up with the individual's performance



in other life-situations. In most cases they do, in the sense that out of thousands of people, the majority who get high scores are capable of difficult and complex work. But there will be exceptions, and it is never possible to say of any one individual with absolute certainty that he will be capable of a particular kind of job on test results alone.

The reason is that an intelligence test measures "quickness on the uptake" to a great extent in isolation from the other attributes of the individual. It takes little or no account of honesty, integrity, determination in the face of obstacles, or the ability to remain calm when things go wrong. But every real-life situation demands some of these qualities along with intelligence, so if we find someone who has a quick mind and no stability or perseverance he will not do so well as his intelligence test score, taken by itself, would lead us to expect.

We may say with some confidence, then, for higher education or for a high level of job, that no one below a certain level on an intelligence test is likely to succeed. But we cannot say that anyone above that level is sure to succeed or even that he is likely to. So many other factors come into the real-life situation that are not taken into account by the intelligence test.

Some people are able to make their intelligence effective in real-life situations. Such people's achievements match up with what we would expect of them from their scores in tests. But some people are not capable of putting their intelligence to good account, either through lack of persistence, instability, or simply because the situations they find themselves in do not engage their interest sufficiently. When we find someone, then, whose general intelligence as shown by test does not match up with his achievements in real life, the difference very often gives

us a clue to other aspects of his personality. Such cases do not occur very frequently. With perhaps eight people out of ten their test-score links up fairly clearly with their success in real life. The occasional discrepancies, however, are often more revealing than the agreements.

### **Different Kinds of Ability Test**

Some years ago, "intelligence tests" were mainly composed of verbal material, that is to say, the mental tasks which were set to individuals were concerned with the meanings of words or their relations towards each other. It soon became apparent, however, that such mental tasks could also be made up of figures, shapes, abstract diagrams, or mechanical problems.

When any such task, made up according to the principles which underlie such matters, was given to a representative sample of the population, the scores were found to be distributed according to a Normal Curve. It was thus possible to calibrate the test and to decide what were "average", "above average", "very much above average" scores, and so on. When the test was given to a new person, his score could be compared with this scale in order to indicate his quickness with that particular type of material. It thus became possible to measure abilities with other things besides words. In fact, if different tests were calibrated on the same scale, it became possible to find out if one individual's mental ability found its outlet more easily in words, figures, mechanical matters, shapes, or the perception of relationships between symbols other than words or figures.

In some cases, there may be considerable differences. With five tests calibrated on the same scale, one might find an individual whose scores came out as follows :

	E	D	C	B	A
Verbal . . .					x
Numerical . . .					x
Perceptual . . .					x
Shapes . . .				x	
Mechanical . . .				x	

This shows that the general level of his ability is decidedly above average. But the things he seems to find it easiest to deal with are words and figures, while mechanical matters and the relationships of shapes he finds more difficult. Quite obviously this is a pattern of abilities which would find its outlet in one kind of job and not in another. A second individual might show an entirely different pattern, like this one below :

	E	D	C	B	A
Verbal . . .				x	
Numerical . . .				x	
Perceptual . . .					
Shapes . . .				x	
Mechanical . . .					x

Here the general level of ability is much the same, but words and figures show the weakest performance, while the shapes and mechanical scores are relatively high. The jobs that would come easily to this kind of person would be entirely different from those which would suit the one above.

Tests have also been devised for manipulative ability, and for the co-ordination of muscular movements with sensory perception, but these have rather a chequered history in practice. In some cases they have been designed to resemble a particular kind of job and have been used to pick out those who are likely to do well at it. Tests like these, however, usually require apparatus which



may be difficult to set up and maintain, and their scoring and calibration present problems which are not always easy to solve satisfactorily. In recent years they seem rather to have fallen out of use in many cases, and it may be that in practice their limitations have been found to outweigh their usefulness. Paper and pencil tests, on the other hand, though they may bear no great resemblance to any particular job, explore an individual's abilities remarkably thoroughly in a short space of time. Where they are balanced in difficulty and calibrated on the same scale, they will show not only how he compares with other people in the same community for general ability, but also what sort of things come relatively easily to him.

No exhaustive account has been given of testing methods because such matters are best left in the hands of those who make a special study of them. A modern series of matched ability tests must be the result of careful statistical and experimental work involving try-outs on many hundreds of people. Such work can only be carried out by a qualified psychometrician. When it has been done satisfactorily, however, it provides an instrument of measurement which can estimate the particular ability or aptitude it is designed to measure in relation to other people of similar background, with remarkable accuracy when it is properly used.

### **What is the Value of such Tests in Industry ?**

Perhaps the most common source of misunderstanding—and there has been much misunderstanding of intelligence tests—is the failure to realise that they measure a very restricted aspect of the individual's endowments. An intelligence test, for example, will measure the speed and accuracy with which an individual's mind works, but it will not show whether he will apply that mind with

persistence to any one thing. A test of verbal fluency will show whether an individual is likely to have any facility in the use of words, but it will not show whether the words he uses will be sensible and persuasive.

Such tests, then, can each estimate an aspect of personality and they can do this with a high degree of accuracy. Indeed the remarkable thing is, not that they are occasionally misleading, but that they are so frequently reliable and valid, in view of the short time they take to administer and the simple nature of the material. But what they measure is only a narrow function of the human mind, and for any practical purposes in real life we must always make some kind of judgment of the individual as a whole. If we lean too heavily on the limited aspects measured by tests we may be mistaken in our assessment of the whole personality.

But within their limited field tests have a definite contribution to make. It is of great practical use, for example, to have a measure of general capacity by means of which we can estimate any individual in relation to others. We can then say with considerable confidence that he will be very unlikely to be successful in certain jobs because they will overtax his natural capacity for understanding new problems, while he will be likely to find certain jobs much too simple and will quickly become bored with their monotony and repetition. In jobs between these levels he will be likely, other things being equal, to be successful and satisfied.

Similarly with certain special abilities. We shall be able to lay down minimum standards of mechanical understanding, verbal fluency, ability with figures and the like, below which it will be unwise to accept candidates because they will most probably be difficult to train and may never attain a reasonable standard of competence in the job.

## SUMMARY

1. Most physical measurements within a given culture pattern are distributed symmetrically ; the bulk of cases being grouped round the average, with decreasing numbers tailing off above and below.

2. It was found by Binet that the same rules of distribution held also in the mental sphere.

3. Scores on a test of general mental ability tend to be grouped among a large number of people as follows :

very much above average .....	10%
above average .....	20%
average .....	40%
below average .....	20%
very much below average .....	10%

4. In most cases people will gain similar scores on a subsequent test.

5. There tends to be a high degree of correspondence between scores on such ability tests and the level of education an individual can profit by and the complexity of job he can tackle successfully.

6. In the occasional cases where this is not so the reason is usually found in other unsatisfactory personal qualities.

7. Special abilities, mechanical understanding, facility with words and figures, space perception and the like can also be estimated by test.

8. Tests provide a simple and reliable method of estimating certain aspects of an individual's endowment. These aspects are much narrower than is usually supposed.



## CHAPTER V

### MOTIVATION, OR WHY WE DO THINGS

WHY do we have to work? The answer is simple. Most of us work because we haven't enough money to buy the things we need. And the only honest way we know of to provide ourselves with the wherewithal to pay the rent, buy our meals and keep a home going is by working for a wage or salary. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, but in the modern world they are so few that we may safely disregard them.

But what makes us work harder at one kind of job than another? Why do some of us find certain activities pleasurable and stimulating, while others are unutterably boring and tedious? Moreover, why do other people dislike the things we find enjoyable and take what seems to us a peculiar and perverted pleasure in the kinds of activity which we find most hateful? These are not such simple questions to answer and they bring us to this question of motivation. When we are matching up individuals and jobs we must try to put people into the place in which they will find the maximum satisfaction, and where the work they are doing will call out their best efforts. To do this we must have some understanding of the individual's motivation, of what makes him do things.

#### **The Basic Urges**

Right at the basis of human motivation there are probably a few simple and essential drives which are necessary

to sustain life. The urge to eat and drink when we are hungry or thirsty, the urge to shelter and protect ourselves from extremes of cold, the urge to associate with our fellows—unless we feel such urges and respond to them effectively we shall not live very long, for human survival depends on the provision of these simple necessities. In a primitive situation, for example, we can see these urges at work in their simplest form, and if we were suddenly to be cast up on an uninhabited island our behaviour would be governed by the need to provide for these straightforward basic needs. Like Robinson Crusoe or any of the famous castaways, we should be entirely pre-occupied with the provision of food, clothing and shelter.

Such basic urges or drives probably underlie our behaviour at the present day, but any attempt to explain the motivation of men and women in a civilised community entirely in these terms is never completely successful. The theories of Freud, for example, give a prominent place to the sex urge in explaining human motivation. His theory, very briefly, and in a somewhat over-simplified form, was that we are all subject to a strong drive to associate with the opposite sex, as indeed is very true. Society, however, interposes barriers and prohibitions between such associations and insists on their being submitted to some form of regulation in the shape of marriage. Thus a conflict is set up within the individual. He has a strong urge towards sexual activity which is met by an equally strong social prohibition. In order to resolve this conflict he turns to substitute activities, writing sonnets or composing lyrics to his lady, or in other less obvious ways diverting the drive towards love-making into other channels.

Now there is no doubt that some such process may be seen at work in individual behaviour. Moreover, in trying

to help people whose minds and emotions are disordered this theory has often provided the essential clues to the disturbance. But when we are trying to understand the motivation of any particular person in any specific situation it does not help us very much to know that he may be trying to find an outlet for a simple primitive drive which is denied full expression.

Similarly with any theory which tries to explain human behaviour in terms of the simple basic urges. Most of us would probably agree that drives to provide ourselves with food, shelter, and companionship, probably do underlie a great deal of the behaviour of human beings in society. But these drives are so common and universal that they are of very limited help when we are confronted with an individual case. We then want to know how he will try to satisfy these drives, what kind of companionship he will seek, and which activities are going to attract him most.

### **Social Conventions**

How we satisfy our basic urges is largely dictated to us by the customs of the people we live among. Consider the urge to provide ourselves with food, for example. If we are living on a South Sea island we should probably satisfy our hunger by plucking some fruit from a tree, or perhaps by catching a fish or killing an animal, cooking and eating it with our fingers. To make provision for our long-term requirements we might be led to cultivate a plot of land or build a boat to fish from.

But in present-day Britain our food-gathering behaviour is rather different. When we feel hungry we go to a restaurant, sit at a table, use a series of implements and dishes in eating our meal; then we pay our bill. Or we may buy eatables at a shop, take them home to be cooked and eat them round the family dinner-table. 'The means of



satisfying our hunger is entirely different and the need to provide for our long-term requirements leads us to seek the acquisition of money to buy food with, rather than towards agricultural or pastoral pursuits. The basic urge of hunger is the same in both cases, but the means of satisfying it will be different according to where and how people live.

But within these different "culture-patterns" there will be finer differences still. It may be that in the abundant tropical regions at one time everyone helped himself to what Nature provided in fruit and livestock. But very soon a few regulations came to be accepted. Certain fruits came to be prohibited and certain animals to be regarded as unclean. Produce grown by one group of persons was regarded as their own property, and anyone else who helped himself to it was considered to be stealing and thereby breaking the social code.

In our own style of life, also, we are hedged around with social customs. It is regarded as correct to eat certain foods with certain implements, and if, when out to dinner, you take a knife to your green peas, or eat a kipper with your fingers, you will probably not be asked back. Not only must you find your food in the way prescribed by the culture pattern you live in, you must also eat it in the manner which people about you regard as correct.

We have come a long way, therefore, from the simple basic urge to eat and drink. All mankind, indeed all animals are moved by such an urge, and if they fail to satisfy it they will die of starvation. But how this urge will find its expression in the case of any particular person will depend not only on the means available to him for its satisfaction, but also upon what he and the people among whom he lives consider is the proper way to eat and drink.

In other words, hungry men may be much the same all the world over. But some will yearn for a bowl of rice and a pair of chopsticks, some for a well-served meal at the Savoy Hotel, and some for a sheep roasted whole and no nonsense about knives and forks.

### **The Development of Motivation in Childhood**

A small baby is quite as primitive as most savage peoples, and its motivation is as near to the simple basic urges as we are likely ever to see. The training of a baby is very largely a matter of accustoming it to the socially accepted ways of satisfying these basic urges.

As it learns gradually that certain types of behaviour bring a frown to Mummy's face, and even in extreme cases cause Mummy to be angry and perhaps to smack, it will tend to discard them as effective means of getting what it wants. Other types of behaviour, however, which bring pleased smiles to the faces of its parents will tend to be perpetuated as effective means for the satisfaction of needs and the gaining of social approval. A pattern of motivation thus begins to be built up which depends to some extent on the approval and disapproval of those among whom the child passes its early life.

But at the same time, as we have seen, children differ in ability and physique, and find various kinds of activity more or less difficult. The small boy who is strong and agile, though not very brainy, will find it easy to shine at games and active pastimes. He will tend, therefore, to be drawn towards these activities in which he knows he can do well rather than to the work of the classroom where he is under a handicap on account of his slower powers of comprehension.

The puny youth, on the other hand, whose lack of stamina and physical strength makes him ineffective at



games and timid in a rough-and-tumble, will tend to shun such activities in favour of others where his greater mental powers (assuming that he has them) will enable him to achieve some standing and social approval. At quite an early age he will come to seek his satisfactions in the intellectual activities for which he is fitted rather than in the physically active pursuits for which he is not.

An individual's innate endowments, then, of physique, intelligence and the like, will have an effect on his motivation. Added to the approval or disapproval of those about him, they will direct him into certain channels of activity and away from others. The influence of habit, again, will tend to fix the pattern so that he will be likely to return again and again to the same things which have given him satisfaction in the past.

### Understanding Individual Motivation

When we are presented with a particular person, then, and asked to say what kind of job he will like best and work hardest at, we shall not get very far if we can only say that he will seek food, shelter and companionship. We must try to decide how he will try to satisfy these basic urges and in what manner he is likely to be most successful.

Now obviously his pattern of motivation, or the ways in which he seeks his satisfaction, will not be simple. They will be built up from his previous life, from what he has found that he is good at, and from what the people round about him have approved and encouraged. Nevertheless, if we exercise a little patience and try to find out something about his previous history we shall probably see some fairly continuous threads running through it.

These threads we may think of as his *interests*, that is to say the kinds of activity he seems to prefer and to follow up rather than others. In some life-histories we



find a very definite pattern of these preferred activities, and we have no difficulty in saying that the person concerned is interested in one particular kind of thing and that he seeks and finds his satisfactions habitually in that way. In other life-histories the pattern may be less definite though there will still be some clues if we are quick enough to see them.

Interest-patterns may be roughly classified into the following categories :—

### 1. Social Interests

These are concerned with other people, influencing them, organising them or simply being with them. Some people seem to be drawn naturally towards their fellow men, and find their satisfactions mainly in corporate activities. Others seem to find little or no satisfaction in association with a group, and tend to be happier when they are on their own rather than among a crowd.

A social interest-pattern will be shown by a life-history where the individual seems to be drawn towards team games, club activities or the kind of work which involves much contact with other people. If someone talks of his school days with obvious enjoyment and has a record of successful achievement in the dramatic and debating societies, if he has played for the First in cricket or football, and if he has been a Prefect or a House Captain we have the beginnings of a social interest-pattern. If this is followed by success in work like that of a salesman, coupled with active participation in local activities such as Church work, local politics or committee work, it becomes obvious that such a person gravitates naturally towards doing things with other people.

If, on the other hand, we have a boy who takes little or no part in school activities or team games, if his hobbies

are solitary, and if on leaving school he takes up work like that of a draughtsman or a designer, and in his spare time has little or nothing to do with his fellow men, then it is quite apparent that he finds little pleasure in their society. This pattern of interests is non-social, and he is unlikely to be successful or satisfied in a job which involves much contact with others.

Now there are certain types of work which depend almost entirely on contact with other people. The lawyer, the salesman, the physician, and many executive or supervisory jobs are largely made up of influencing others, listening to them, understanding them or directing them. Those who seek their satisfactions among people, whose interests form a social pattern, are likely to work hard at such jobs, to enjoy them, and to be successful in them.

## 2. Practical-constructive Interests

Other interests are concerned with things rather than people, with making things, repairing them or controlling them. Some individuals find great satisfaction in this type of activity, not unnaturally, perhaps, when the results of their work are plain for all to see and use.

A practical-constructive pattern of interests will usually be shown in adolescence by hobbies such as model-making, carpentry, the making of radio sets and the like, and may be continued in later working life in such jobs as that of an engineer, a mechanic or a wood-worker. Spare-time work on home repairs, decoration or furniture-making may complete the picture.

Where a clearly defined interest-pattern like this is found, the individual is obviously going to find his best outlet in the engineering, building, or any other of the trades concerned with making things. That is not to say, of course, that every boy who has played with a set



of tools will be successful in those trades. Most of us at one time or another have, from choice or necessity, made shape to do something with our hands. But only when the activity is continued systematically and with some measure of success does it become a significant interest-pattern.

### 3. **Physically-active Interests**

Some people seem to find an especially keen enjoyment in the exercise of their physical strength. They seek out strenuous and uncomfortable things to do at weekends, and by climbing hills, walking long distances, or taking part in exhausting games they pit their own endurance and stamina against the forces of Nature or against others. Regrettable though their methods may seem to those of us who cling to our comforts, there is no denying that they seem to derive a real satisfaction from their achievements.

A physically-active pattern like this is not difficult to recognise and it at once suggests certain types of work. Soldiering or seafaring, colonial development work or forestry, these and many other jobs provide the outlet which such people can make use of. On a humbler plane, certain types of labouring work attract this kind of person. It is no unusual thing to see in a gang of loaders one man who seems to take a pride in carrying more than the others and being the strong man of the party. Likewise when the steel-work is being erected for a new building, it is quite obvious that the riggers are perfectly conscious of the audience which their dangerous and dramatic task usually attracts.

### 4. **Intellectual Interests**

There are also people who are always more interested in theory than practice. They like to see the principle



which underlies the outward manifestation, and are happier when dealing with ideas than with things or people.

Intellectual interests will generally be shown by the finding of satisfaction in academic work, either at school, technical college or at the University, and also by the amount of time devoted to reading and the quality of the books read. Most people read something nowadays but not everyone reads seriously for information or instruction. Those whose intellectual interests lead them to follow up subjects systematically and persistently will usually be successful and satisfied in jobs which depend on ideas—research-workers, designers, development men, and the like.

By considering an individual's preferred activities and grouping them under one or more broad categories we shall gain some idea of the direction in which he will be most likely to seek and find his satisfactions. This will give us some clue as to his motivation which in turn will suggest the kinds of job he will work at with enthusiasm. But we want to know more than merely the direction of his interests.

## Standards and Achievements

We want to know something of the standards an individual sets himself. If his interest-pattern is mainly intellectual, for example, will he be content to be the oracle of the four-ale bar, gleaning his information mainly from the penny newspapers? Such a standard is modest compared with a person who reads the more serious weeklies with attention and regularity, and who aspires to move among people who are really well-informed about the affairs of the day, and whose jobs bring them into contact with the shaping of events.



Similarly with practical-constructive interests. One man may set himself a high standard by designing an intricate and original model which calls for fine workmanship and much patience. Another may potter about with a little home decorating, and feel completely satisfied with himself when he has distempered the kitchen. From the work point of view these two men will probably be suitable for entirely different jobs, for although the *direction* of their interests is somewhat similar, the *standards* they set themselves are widely different.

Linked up with the standards an individual sets himself is the level of achievement he has actually reached. We all encounter obstacles, and whether we surmount them or not usually depends on how far we have shown determination and persistence in pursuit of our aims. Thus if someone professes a great interest in reading but never finds time or opportunity to study his chosen subject we shall begin to wonder whether his motivation in that direction is not rather weak and inconsistent. On the other hand if someone succeeds in being well-informed about current events in spite of having to work at another task for long hours, and in spite of not being very well off, we shall be inclined to think that he has shown consistency and resource in following up his chosen activity.

The individual's level of achievement, then, provides a valuable indication of his ability to work steadily and with determination towards his chosen goal, while at the same time the standard of that goal in relation to his ability and opportunity will show whether he aims high or is satisfied with fairly modest successes. This information will be useful in deciding the kind of work he is best fitted for. But in this connection we can also consider the width and variety of an individual's interest-pattern.



Some people seem to undertake a diverse variety of activities and to set themselves a high standard in all of them, which in most cases they achieve. Their social interests may include offices in several clubs and societies, a high standard of entertaining, and a wide acquaintanceship among distinguished people. Intellectually they may be well-informed on a variety of subjects and may be expert in some of them. Their physically-active recreations may take them to County standard at certain games while their holidays may be spent in distant lands under primitive conditions. Such an interest-pattern shows a many-sided participation in life which matches up with certain executive jobs, or with positions of great public importance which make a similar many-sided demand on those who occupy them. Such positions set high standards and call for great achievements. The reward they offer, however, is usually commensurate.

### **Reality-content**

We must consider, also, how far an individual's interest-pattern is capable of satisfaction in the real world in which he is living. For it is always possible that his spare-time life may represent a retreat into the easily achieved satisfactions of a day-dream.

There are some people, for example, who aspire to take an important position among their fellow men, but who lack either the opportunity or the personal qualities to do so. They may take refuge in some eccentricity of dress or manner which in a limited circle may give them a kind of artificial status and so satisfy their vanity, without the burden or difficulty of a really responsible position. Then again there are others, conscious of the fact that they are not doing very well in their ordinary life, who take up some abstruse and esoteric hobby and gain a kind of substitute



satisfaction in knowing more than most people about this uncommon and rather useless activity.

When considering an individual's interest-pattern, then, we must think how it fits in with the whole of his life, what opportunities he has for its pursuit, and whether it accords with the normal standards of the people he lives among. If we found a minor administrative official in a large organisation, for example, who spent most of his leisure in the study of some little-known Eastern religion, and who was a prominent member in a small band of initiates meeting together to practise strange rites in this country, we should be inclined to think that he was finding rather unreal compensation for a very unsatisfying and unsuccessful life in the day-to-day world. Quite a number of activities, of course, provide this substitute satisfaction, and indeed many are designed to do so and depend on it for their commercial success. The music-hall comedian who creates the illusion of friendliness and good-fellowship among a crowd of strangers met fortuitously together in a theatre, the barmaid who helps her middle-aged and rather dull regular customers to believe themselves witty and important men of the world, these and similar activities provide some escape from the depressing realities of normal existence, and we all fall for them now and again.

But when an individual's interests are too deeply tinged with unreality they may represent a serious diversion of effort from real-life pursuits to these substitute satisfactions. And as such they are important from our point of view in indicating doubtful and unrealistic motivation.

### **The Pattern of Motivation**

We must remember that we are looking for threads running through an individual's life-pattern rather than

isolated activities. Under this heading we must beware above all of over-simplification. We are not simply concerned with spare-time life, and indeed if we confine ourselves to that we may well be misled. Think of a boy who is keen on cricket. Does this suggest that he should become a cricket professional? Obviously not, because he may like the game from all sorts of reasons. He may like the physical activity, or he may find social satisfaction in being one of a team. He may delight in knowing all about the abstruse records and championships in which the game abounds—thus showing an intellectual interest in it. He may even be a sort of self-appointed groundsman and take a practical-constructive delight in marking out the pitch and having the equipment ready.

Single items, then, are of little use. We are looking for a pattern of preferred activities which runs through the individual's life. We want to know the general direction of these preferences, the standards he sets himself, the levels he achieves and the relation of his achievements to his opportunities in real life and to his abilities. From this we shall be able to get some idea of the strength, direction and reality-content of his motivation. In simpler terms, perhaps, we shall know what kinds of incentive he will respond to.

It is possible that all this may sound a little high-flown, and that the reader may gain the impression that we are expecting ordinary people to indulge in colourful and dramatic spare-time pursuits. This, of course, is not the case. The motivation of most people is very conventional and unadventurous; they set themselves indifferent standards and are satisfied with modest achievements. Only occasionally does one interview someone who seems to be living his life to the full, making the best use of his abilities in work and leisure, setting himself high,

though realistic goals, and working steadily towards them. A moment's consideration of our own lives will confirm this depressing truth.

This balance accords very well, of course, with the levels of satisfaction offered by the jobs available. Most work in industry and outside it is fairly unadventurous and humdrum, well suited to those who make only modest demands of life. It is the exceptional job which calls for high motivation and offers wide scope and great rewards. Our problem is to steer the exceptional people towards such jobs.

### **A Scale for Motivation**

These differences in Motivation accord with the distribution outlined on p. 50. At the upper extreme we find a small proportion of people who are really making the most of their opportunities and abilities. They find no difficulty in deciding on their goals and following them up successfully. At the lower extreme there is an equally small proportion who are just drifting along with no aims beyond their next meal and without any clear idea of where that is coming from. In the average grade are those who get along fairly well, but who do not put themselves out in any way and who tend to give up when difficulties appear.

Above the average we have those who are making their way in life with reasonable success, though without the brilliance of the top grade. Below the average we have those whose motivation shows some degree of unreality and confusion of aim.



## SUMMARY

1. We must know what kind of activities an individual will like best and work hardest at if we are to match him up with a suitable job.

2. Basically each of us is motivated by simple desires like those for food, clothing, shelter and companionship, but our method of satisfying these desires will vary according to where we live and how we have been brought up.

3. Each individual tends to seek out the kind of things he can do best and which are approved by those with whom he lives. This pattern tends to be fixed by habit, and if we study his life-history we can usually see if it tends in a social, practical, physically-active or intellectual direction.

4. In addition to the direction, however, we want to know what sort of standards he sets himself and whether he works steadily and successfully towards them.

5. We also want to know something about the breadth of his interests and their reality-content. If his spare-time pursuits seem to be a retreat from real life, his motivation may be doubtful.

6. Under the heading of interests, the general pattern of preferred activities in work and leisure is more significant than the individual items. In most cases it is fairly conventional and accords reasonably well with the satisfactions offered by the ordinary job. Motivation, in fact, falls into a scale according to the Normal Curve of Distribution.

## CHAPTER VI

### ADJUSTMENT, OR THE ROLE WE TAKE AMONG OTHERS

WHAT is the most frequent cause of failure on a job, real failure, that is to say, when a man is dismissed or demoted? It is not usually lack of intelligence, because, within limits, people can usually get by if they have enough experience or enough patience to work out the right answer. It is certainly not lack of qualifications, because in this country we are not very rigid about certificates or technical experience. It is probably not even lack of interest, for many people can go through the motions of their job quite adequately, although they must find their main satisfactions outside.

What a man cannot get away with, however, is a failure to stand up to the social responsibilities of a job, a failure to do the minimum which other people expect of him. That minimum is usually quite modest. If a man can turn up at the work-place with reasonable regularity and fair punctuality, if he can avoid falling out with his mates and his foreman, and if he can be relied on to work at a certain rate and a given level of quality, he can usually stay in a job, even though his rate of output is not very high in relation to an absolute standard.

The unfortunate people who cannot conform to these standards, however, those who cannot be relied on to turn up at the right place and the right time, those who get into noisy rows which may end up in fights, and those who cannot work steadily at anything for long—people like

these, in effect, sack themselves. It becomes quite impossible for any corporate effort to succeed so long as the working group includes many members who are so unable to fit into the team.

All this is pretty trite and obvious, but there are a few individuals who find great difficulty in discharging the minimum responsibilities which are involved in working along with other people. At the same time there are some jobs which require a good deal more than these minimum responsibilities. We must consider, then, an individual's *adjustment*, that is to say the degree to which he will be found reliable and easy to get on with. We must think of the kind of position he is capable of occupying in relation to other people.

### **Inward States and Outward Appearances**

There is a very close correspondence between how we feel within ourselves and how we appear to other people. The man who is inwardly happy and at peace with himself will have little difficulty in getting on easily with others and will usually be found an agreeable companion; he will have a large circle of friends and will be generally popular. The man who is uncertain of himself, who lacks confidence and who fears he will make a fool of himself, can seldom take much of a part in affairs which involve others. He will remain isolated, self-conscious and ill-at-ease with other people.

This is particularly noticeable among younger people. The adolescent boy at his first dance is seldom a social success. He stands around on one foot, and says the wrong thing at the wrong moment. He hangs back when he should make a move, and then rushes forward when it would be better to stay still. He will be lucky if he gets away without making a fool of himself, and as an asset to



the party his value is very small. The reason for this uncouth behaviour, of course, is that he is bound up with self-consciousness, preoccupied with a desire to be a social success, and at the same time extremely afraid of doing the wrong thing. The inward state of his nerves exactly matches the awkward, ill-controlled appearance he makes among others.

How this correspondence between our state of mind and our appearance to others comes about is quite simple when we remember that other people can only judge us by what we say and do. If we behave as they expect they will accept us as reasonable people, but if we do things which seem to them peculiar, they will be rather diffident about allowing us to come to close terms with them. Now we can, of course, only behave as people expect if we exercise a certain amount of control over ourselves, and we can only see the need for that control and exercise it effectively when we are fairly calm and collected.

When, therefore, we are upset and bothered about something we shall be in danger of behaving in an ill-controlled or unexpected manner, and other people may say to themselves "He's got something on his mind." This is an experience which happens occasionally to most of us. But when an individual seems always to be doing unexpected things and when he seems to have less than the usual amount of control over himself we are probably justified in thinking that in adjustment he is a little odd.

### **Clues to an Individual's Adjustment**

If outward behaviour is so closely linked up with the inward state of mind, it provides a useful means of summing up a new person. In ordinary life, of course, we do this automatically, but we are probably liable to attach too much importance to short periods of behaviour when

we are in contact with someone, and can observe him. To make a more accurate assessment of his adjustment we want to know something of his behaviour over a longer period.

We want to know, in fact, the kind of role he tends to assume among other people. Most of us have quite a characteristic role in a social situation. Some tend to be the life and soul of the party, on good terms with everyone, taking the lead and helping to put other people in a good frame of mind. Some tend to be shy and retiring, they have little contact with others and remain isolated in a group. Some are awkward and aggressive, they make enemies and tend to promote ill-feeling and hostility. Some, again, are apt to be made a butt of, and seem to invite other people to make a fool of them.

It is always rather remarkable how consistent people are in the role they take among others. They have free choice in the way they will talk and act, but they always seem within quite narrow limits to choose to say and do the same kind of things. They thus encourage other people to accept them in the same kind of way, and whether they are among associates of long standing or among a group of quite new acquaintances, they will usually be found to have adopted the same kind of role.

In listening to someone's life history, therefore, one often sees the same pattern tending to repeat itself. If in one situation he has got on well with others, when he changes his situation he seems once more to establish easy relationships with his associates. The same role seems to crop up in most situations, which suggests that the same kind of behaviour has brought it about. We then have a clue as to what seems to be the same state



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of mind which remains substantially unchanged over a period.

What we have said so far, then, could be summed up as follows :

(a) An individual's outward behaviour is closely linked up with his inward state of mind.

(b) His outward behaviour will determine how other people accept him and the kind of role he will play among them.

(c) If we can find the characteristic role an individual seems to fall into among others, we shall have a pretty clear idea about his adjustment or the characteristic state of his emotions.

### **The Emotions**

The principal emotions—anger, fear, tenderness and the like—can be seen without difficulty by anyone interested in the subject, in any healthy baby. Up to one year old, when we are unjustly deprived of what we want, at once we roar with anger so that everyone shall know of our displeasure. When the world is too much for us, we wail in misery and defy all efforts at consolation for a time. When we are pleased, we chuckle and crow, and react with enthusiasm to anyone who plays with us.

There is something fine and uninhibited about a baby's emotional life. The state of mind follows naturally on the circumstances which call it forth and the feelings are given expression immediately and effectively. Usually, of course, they do not last very long, and one state of mind is followed fairly rapidly by another. But however a baby may be feeling at any one time, the surrounding world generally knows all about it and those responsible for the infant can take whatever action may seem to be



appropriate. This is what tends to put circles under the eyes of most parents, but it is no use blaming the baby, because no one expects that such a small person will have any control over its emotions.

As we grow up, however, we are expected to develop some kind of control, and in fact the usual remonstrance to someone who gives vent to rather more emotion than is appropriate to the situation is "Don't go on like a baby." The process of growing up, in fact, is very largely one of developing control over our emotions, so that when we feel angry or frightened we do not immediately give way to gusts of temper or panic without some attempt to remain calm and collected.

Living among other people, then, demands that the free and uninhibited emotional life of the baby be modified and controlled, and as we grow up, our roarings and wailings and crowings die down until only an occasional frown or whimper remains. The pressure of our fellows will see to this, and we shall find it to our advantage to develop the ability to remain calm and collected even under considerable provocation.

### **Characteristic Emotional Patterns**

Among adults, however, there is quite often a particular emotion which, so to speak, lies nearer the surface than others. It can be set off by a comparatively small stimulus and tends to make itself felt more frequently. In an irritable person, for example, the angry emotions lie nearest the surface, and sometimes quite a minor occurrence may cause him to give vent to a display of indignation which is quite out of proportion to the situation. A similar stimulus would have no effect on someone else.

People in whom the fearful emotions lie near the

surface can be thrown into a fluster when any small thing goes wrong. They may not be easily angered but they are easily worried. Sentimental people, who are easily appealed to by artificial scenes of pathos or affection, are those in whom the tender emotions can be brought into play more quickly than usual.

This view of individual patterns of emotion is necessarily somewhat over-simplified and tends to lump people together in rather artificial classifications. But when we think of our friends and acquaintances from this point of view we can usually decide that most of them have a characteristic way of reacting to situations which remains remarkably consistent throughout their life.

At the same time the degree of control which individuals develop over their emotions varies considerably from one to another. Some people have a remarkable power of remaining calm and collected in the most trying circumstances. No matter what calamities and dangers they may encounter they show no signs of fluster, and choose the appropriate course of action as though unaware of the tensions of the situation. Other people have a very defective control over their emotional life and tend to be shaken by gusts of passion, stricken by panic, or overcome with tenderness through quite minor, and at times unworthy causes. Most of us, we hope, fall somewhere between these two extremes.

We are confronted, then, with a variety of individual emotional patterns, each depending upon the emotions which lie nearest the surface and the degree of control which has been developed. While there are similarities, the number of individual variations is too large to admit of any precise system of classification, and it is much better to try to understand each pattern individually rather than to seek for types. The "irritable type",



the "worrying", the "controlled type"—such classifications are usually of only limited help in practice.

### Characteristic Roles

What we can usefully do, however, is to try to understand the kind of role which an individual's emotional pattern causes him to fall into among other people. If his powers of controlling his emotions are defective he will find it very difficult to sustain any role steadily and consistently among others. He will tend to agree enthusiastically to undertaking some task but when the time comes he will fail to turn up. He will fail to see what is important and may give undue weight to some quite minor aspect of the situation. Lack of control will link up with unreliability and irresponsibility.

Again, the irritable, angry man who is incapable of resisting outbursts of ill-temper will find it difficult to work in harmony with other people. He will be found quarrelsome and unco-operative and will tend to get into rows with the people around him. His emotional pattern will lead him into the role of a difficult, awkward member of the team who can only work with others when he is handled with extreme care.

The mature, well-controlled person will be capable of accepting responsibility because of his ability to sustain a more difficult role than the average. If people find they can rely on him always to do what is wanted they will feel able to trust him with work that is important and difficult.

The role that is most trying and important of all, of course, is that of taking charge of other people. Human beings are more intractable to deal with than any form of material, and they make heavy demands on the patience of anyone who has to take charge of them. Only those



whose emotions are well balanced and under adequate control can fulfil the role of leader among them.

### **The Assessment of Adjustment**

We shall understand someone's adjustment, then, when we know the kinds of role he has sustained in the past. If on the one hand we find someone who seems always to have taken the lead among others, to have accepted heavy responsibilities and to have discharged them successfully over a long period, we can be fairly certain that he has a well-organised emotional life. If on the other hand we find someone who has a long record of unexplained failure, with only short periods in jobs, dismissals for "reorganisation" and hard-luck tales of discrimination against him, we can be fairly sure that we have someone with a poor pattern of emotions and a low level of adjustment.

But not all cases fall into such simple extremes. Most people have a somewhat mixed record. They seem to have been fairly successful in one place and in another to have done rather less well. They have coped with one kind of situation adequately and have failed in another. Our task, then, becomes the building up of a picture showing the kind of role an individual has sustained with success and the kind that has proved beyond him. We may find, for example, that a man can take a considerable degree of responsibility so long as he is not dealing with people, or that he can take charge of people so long as he is not left on his own to face difficult decisions.

Such evidence will show the limits within which the individual is likely to be successful, and we can then consider the kinds of job he can cope with from this point of view. A job which involves leadership will demand of its occupant a difficult and trying role. He must carry a

considerable weight of responsibility without showing any signs of strain, and he must be ready at any time to give the word of encouragement, restraint, or reproof that the situation demands. He must be found always unmoved by those under him, and must not react unexpectedly to the day-to-day problems. Such a role can only be carried out by someone who is mature and well-adjusted.

The role demanded by a routine production job, on the other hand, may make few demands beyond being in the appropriate place at the proper time, going through a fairly simple series of motions, being amenable to the directions of the foreman and remaining on reasonable terms with other workers. Such a role makes few demands and the person who is reasonably well-organised in his emotions can sustain it without difficulty. A high degree of reliability is not called for because the worker is adequately supervised and there is only a minimum degree of responsibility.

Nevertheless, there are some unfortunates who are so badly adjusted emotionally that even the simplest job is beyond them. They appear unable to sustain any kind of role among others even for a short period of time, and they drift from job to job without being able to settle down anywhere. Such people present a very serious social problem to the community, while to the individual firms they can be a source of considerable trouble.

Different social groups make it more or less easy to sustain the role they require of an individual. Where there are good relationships and mutual helpfulness people with somewhat shaky adjustment can often get on reasonably well. Once they are moved to a less agreeable social atmosphere they may be unable to sustain what seems to be exactly the same kind of role. These

differences must be taken into account in assessing adjustment. It may well be that the unfortunates who cannot sustain even the simplest role in ordinary life need some such special environment in which allowance can be made for their emotional disabilities.

### **A Scale for Adjustment**

Once again we shall find that these differences fall approximately into a Normal Distribution from which a scale can be built up. At the top end will be those who are so well adjusted that they can cope with very great responsibilities and who inevitably rise to high positions of leadership. At the lower extreme will be those who cannot stand up even to the normal pressures of daily life, and who have to be kept in institutions for the mentally ill. In the average grade will be the ordinary person who can cope with the strains put upon him in the normal way, but who finds it difficult to keep his head when things go wrong. Above the average will be those to whom the normal person turns in a crisis, and below the average will be the awkward or difficult people for whom they have to make allowances.



## SUMMARY

1. One element in success at any job is steadiness or reliability and other qualities of adjustment.

2. An individual's inward state of mind generally corresponds closely with his outward behaviour.

3. We can usually tell, then, from the kind of role an individual tends to take up among other people, what is his characteristic state of mind.

4. Emotions, such as fear, anger and tenderness, tend to be freely expressed in early youth but are controlled as we grow up.

5. Nevertheless different people have different patterns of emotion and different degrees of control over them.

6. These differences will be seen in the kinds of role they have been able to cope with successfully in the past.

7. At the same time they will indicate the kinds of role, and hence the degree of responsibility in work, they will be able to deal with in the future. Once again, a scale corresponding to the Normal Curve of Distribution can be set up.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIVE-FOLD GRADING

FORMER editions of this Handbook have utilised the National Institute of Psychology Seven-point Plan as a means of grouping human characteristics under a series of manageable headings. But while this Plan forms an admirable starting point, it is capable of further development, and it was in an attempt to take it one stage farther that the Five-fold Grading came into being.

There are only two basic differences between the Five-fold Grading and the Seven-point Plan. The first and most obvious is the number of headings. The Plan employed seven, Physique, Attainments, General Intelligence, Special Aptitudes, Interests, Disposition, and Circumstances. Of these, the last tends to include some matters which perhaps belong more naturally to the case-history. It has consequently been combined with the Attainments heading into Qualifications and Expectations. The two headings which deal with the Cognitive side of the mind, General Intelligence and Special Aptitudes, may be considered separate entities if a certain theory of ability testing is held. Some authorities, however, are doubtful if such a separation is justified. It seems legitimate, therefore, to substitute one heading labelled Abilities, or as this attribute is more generally termed in ordinary speech, Brains.

The second difference concerns the use of scales in

addition to headings. It is already accepted on the widest possible basis that most human attributes are distributed approximately according to a Normal Curve. This means, in effect, that people are not divided into opposing groups labelled "Stupid" and "Brainy", or "Awkward" and "Easy to Get On With". They are rather arranged symmetrically around an average, with the majority neither stupid nor brainy, but somewhere in between. Diminishing numbers tail off above until the few really "brainy" people are reached, and below until the few really dumb ones are met. On this basis it is usually possible to set up scales for human characteristics. The difficulty is, however, that no one will ever be found at the same level on the scales for different characteristics.

### **Relation between the Seven-point Plan and Five-fold Grading**

Human personality presents a complex picture, and it makes no difference to its intricacies whether we look at it from five points of view or seven or thirteen. There are obvious advantages in reducing the headings to the smallest number which is consistent with an adequate treatment of the subject. The following table is an attempt to reduce human attributes to their essentials (centre column), and to relate the headings of the Five-fold Grading (left-hand column) to those of the Seven-point Plan (right-hand column).

Should it prove necessary, this will serve as a "conversion table" between the two methods of dealing with human personality.



Five-fold Grading		Seven-point plan
FIRST IMPRESSION AND PHYSICAL MAKE-UP	The physical attributes of an individual, including his health and fitness, his body-build and strength; and those qualities which are immediately apparent to an onlooker, his appearance, how he turns himself out, how he speaks, and his manner with other people.	PHYSIQUE
QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	The individual's cultural background, his knowledge and education both formal and informal, his experience at work, his expectations in terms of remuneration as determined by his way of life and responsibilities.	ATTAINMENTS. CIRCUMSTANCES
BRAINS AND ABILITIES	The cognitive powers of the individual, his ability to take in and interpret information, his quickness in learning different kinds of subject-matter, and the levels to which his intellectual and other abilities allow him to be trained.	GENERAL INTELLIGENCE. SPECIAL ABILITIES
MOTIVATION	The individual's capacity for directing his efforts, the particular directions in which he chooses most frequently to use his abilities; the levels of achievement he sets for himself, and the degree to which he seems realistic and successful in following up his goals.	INTERESTS
ADJUSTMENT	The emotional side of the individual's life, his stability and control, the degree of strain he can adjust to, and the kinds of role he seems to fall naturally into among other people.	DISPOSITION

## Scales of Difference

We dealt in Chapter III with the fact that whenever any human characteristic has been made the subject of measurement, its distribution throughout a homogeneous population has been found to approximate to a Normal Curve. Where a standard unit of measurement is available, therefore, this makes it possible to set up a scale for that characteristic comprising five gradings as follows :

A. Top, or very much above average grade, containing the top 10% of the measurements for that characteristic.

B. Next, or above average grade, containing the next 20%.

C. Middle, or average grade, containing the 40% of measurements grouped round the average.

D. Lower, or below average grade, containing the lower 20% of the measurements.

E. Bottom, or very much below average grade, containing the bottom 10% of the measurements for the characteristic.

In the case of height, which can be accurately measured in feet and inches, the scale is shown below for males in this country :

A grade	6 feet and above	Very tall
B grade	5 feet 9 inches to 6 feet	Fairly tall
C grade	5 feet 6 inches to 5 feet 9 inches	Average height
D grade	5 feet 3 inches to 5 feet 6 inches	Rather short
E grade	5 feet 3 inches and below	Very short

Where standard units of measurement are available, such scales can be made accurate and reliable, and normal observation will show how easily men fall into these five grades.

There are very many human characteristics, however, which cannot be measured in feet and inches or in any

other standard units. Those we have been considering in previous chapters, for example, are mainly intangible, and can only be inferred from some sort of behaviour. Measuring them, or estimating them, is a more complex affair than merely using a foot-rule to find out how tall a man is.

In some cases an approximation to standard units can be found by calibration in terms of an average. This is, in effect, what happens in the case of standard test. A number of people are given a task to do under exactly the same circumstances, in a form in which their performance can easily be expressed in the form of a numerical score. When these scores are arranged on a graph, some approximation to the Normal Curve of Distribution almost invariably emerges, and from this point onwards the process is simply one of measuring in terms of deviations from the average. Various methods are available of different degrees of complexity and reliability, but they need not detain us here. As has been said above, standard tests are the province of the specialist. But for ordinary purposes, a highly simplified version of the same process can be very useful.

When considering any human quality, it is not usually difficult to think of the extremes, that is to say, the people who possess it to the maximum degree and to the minimum. Take, for example, speech and manner. We can all call to mind an example of a particularly charming person, who has a pleasant voice and whose way of putting things is always particularly agreeable; who always appears glad to see us, and whose manner makes us feel especially at ease. Such a person is at the top end of the scale. Down at the bottom end is the very uncouth individual whose speech is practically incoherent, and whose manner is so rough as to prevent any sort of effec-



tive contact with his fellow men. Such types do not occur very often, but they do exist, and we have all had some experience of them.

Then there is the average. What is the normal person like, "normal" that is to say in terms of speech and manner? He probably speaks fairly correctly, though he has no special facility in expressing himself, and he is reasonably friendly and self-possessed so long as he is among his own associates on his own ground. When he is placed in a strange situation, however, he tends to become self-conscious and to be either diffident and shy on the one hand, or rather pushful and aggressive on the other. There are very many people like this, and they constitute the middle grade on such a scale.

Above the average will be the people whose speech is rather more fluent than the average and whose manner is sufficiently poised to be able to stand up to unfamiliar situations. They may lack the charm of the very much above average people, but they are rather more competent at their social relationships than the average. In the same way, below the average are those whose speech is incorrect and whose manner is rather more rough than the average, though not sufficiently uncouth to place them in the bottom grade.

Putting these descriptions together, we shall find that we have constructed a scale which accords very well with the Normal Distribution.

A Grade (top 10%). Pleasant voice and attractive speech, considerable charm of manner, capable of dealing with any social situation.

B Grade (next 20%). Fluent speech and confident manner, capable of dealing successfully with unfamiliar situations.

	E Grade (10% Very Much Below Average)	D Grade (20% Below Average)
First Impression and Physical Make-up	Unkempt and badly dressed. Rough in speech and manner.	Rather scruffy and untidy about details. Slovenly speech and awkward manner.
Qualifications and Expectations	Interrupted schooling. No vocational training. Labouring job.	Left school at normal age, but did badly. Some training for a few months. Semi-skilled job.
Brains and Abilities	Only able to tackle the very simplest kind of work.	Able to cope with routine work under supervision.
Motivation	Disintegrated personality. Unable to set any goals at all.	Goals either below or unrealistically above capacity. Inconsistent and unpredictable unless carefully supervised.
Adjustment	Mental illness. Unable to cope with ordinary life.	Awkward and difficult. Has to have special consideration and careful handling.

THE FIVE-

C Grade (middle 40%). Reasonably correct speech, though with no great facility in expression, manner quite self-possessed on own ground, but tending to be inadequate in a strange environment.

D Grade (lower 20%). Speech faults and difficulties

C Grade (40% Average)	B Grade (20% Above Average)	A Grade (10% Very Much Above Average)
Reasonably neat and tidy, but undistinguished. Correct speech. Quite at ease on own ground.	Well turned out and carefully dressed. Well spoken with attractive, friendly manner.	Perfectly turned out, distinguished appearance; very pleasant voice with charm of manner.
Left school at normal age, having done well. 3-5 years apprenticeship. Skilled jobs.	Grammar School to 16-18. Indentured Apprenticeship with 3-5 years part-time classes. Supervisory job.	University. Professional level of training. Managerial job.
Able to learn work which involves skill and day-to-day planning.	Able to plan the work of others within a framework of policy.	Able to assimilate and interpret detailed information and plan long-term developments.
Sets himself fair goals, and follows them up quite consistently. Could do better.	Goals high in relation to abilities and opportunities. Generally succeeds in what he sets out to do.	Aiming as high as possible, and never deviating from plan. Always achieves goals.
Fits in quite well with others, and can take fair responsibility, but with little powers of leadership.	Usually found in significant role. Can take responsibility for others. Doesn't lose his head.	Always found in leadership positions. Takes great responsibility without strain.

FOLD GRADING

in expression, manner rather awkward and at times inadequate to normal social relations.

E Grade (bottom 10%). Speech incoherent and incomprehensible, uncouth manner which makes normal social contact impossible.



The same process can be carried out with most human attributes. Some reference has been made to scales like these when we were discussing Motivation and Adjustment, and it will be seen, once the process becomes familiar, that for any one quality people fall easily and naturally into five gradings. Scales for the five headings we have been using have been drawn together on pp. 96 and 97, and constitute the Five-fold Grading on which this edition has been based. It provides a means of arranging our ideas about people and jobs so that the requirements of the one can be set out in objective terms and the potentialities of the other can be summed up in the same terms.

It is not to be expected that these descriptive scales can ever be accurate and objective to the same degree as scales based on proper units of measurement. In fact, there is a danger that the very tidiness of the Five-fold Grading will lead people to think that their fellow human beings will fall neatly into the little labelled boxes on the chart. Such an outlook misses the point entirely. Human personality is far too complex ever to be reduced to simple gradings, and to lose sight of this fact is to give up hope of ever arriving at a proper understanding of it. The scales and headings of the Five-fold Grading are merely a framework on which to arrange our ideas about human attributes. They will make useful servants, but they make a very bad master.

Some idea of the levels of accuracy which may be expected from such scales may be gained from the two preliminary studies reported in Chapter XVI.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR? JOB STUDY

IN the last few chapters we have been considering the different aspects of the individual and looking a little deeper into the five headings we are using as our basis of classification.

We have seen that the headings of First Impression, Qualifications and Expectations depend largely on collecting facts about the candidate's background, his education and experience, and his health, outward appearance, and manner. Our information here is almost entirely objective, and when we have collected and interpreted it we should know a good deal about an individual's standards of expectation both as regards money and prestige in work, about what he is qualified to do, about what physical strain he can stand up to, and about the kind of initial impression he will make on other people.

We have seen also that an individual's ability to profit by certain kinds of training can be estimated remarkably accurately by certain kinds of test. Different kinds of ability tests will show how far he can comprehend new problems quickly and accurately, and whether figures, words, mechanical things or spatial problems come most easily to him.

We have found also that we can get a line on the important question of an individual's "will-to-work" by considering his interest-pattern, which will show which kinds of activity give him greatest satisfaction, what levels of

achievement he sets himself, and how persistently and successfully he pursues these aims.

Lastly we have found that by considering the kinds of role an individual has sustained with success among other people we shall get some idea of his adjustment and hence of the levels of responsibility he is likely to cope with in the future.

We should now be in a position to describe human personality rather more adequately than before and to lay down the levels we require in the various aspects of an individual with greater accuracy. With these categories of description in our minds let us turn again to the question of job-study and consider how to draw up a precise specification of the kind of person required for each job.

### **Unrealistic Requirements**

No selection procedure can be adequate which does not begin with a clear definition of what is required. But how seldom does the interviewer know exactly what he is looking for! Consider the following not-so-imaginary conversation.

"Now, Mr. Department Manager, this job you have asked me to fill, I suppose the man must be reliable?"

"Why, certainly, Mr. Employment Officer. I can't have people working for me that I can't rely on."

"Naturally. And how about intelligence? Does this job demand quick powers of comprehension?"

"Oh, I think so. It may look simple at first glance, but it takes some time to pick up. If you send me someone who is slow on the uptake, he may take weeks to train, and of course we have no time for that in a department like this."

"Quite so. Do you want an experienced man?"



"Certainly. As I've just said, we don't want to waste time on training people who don't know anything about this kind of work."

"I see. And what about his ability to get on with other people? Does he have to be acceptable?"

"Definitely. You see, I pride myself on the team spirit in my department. We are, if I may say so, a very happy section and naturally we don't want to risk having our good relationships spoiled by one of these difficult customers who would set the whole place by the ears. People who have a grouse against life, you know, they're trouble-makers, and we don't want that kind here."

So far, you see, we have elicited that the man must be reliable, intelligent, experienced, and acceptable, and no doubt if the conversation went on we should find that he had to be morally above suspicion and capable of working without supervision as well. But these qualities are very desirable in any job, and the kind of specification we are building up would apply equally to an electrician's mate and the General Manager. It is couched in such general terms as to be virtually meaningless.

But there is another difficulty. The supply of men who are reliable, intelligent, capable of working without supervision and easy to get on with, is strictly limited. Most people have some of these desirable qualities to a certain degree, but like you and me they tend to lack some of the others. And if anyone is looking for a set of paragons like that to staff an ordinary department he is going to be sadly disappointed when he comes to see the real human beings who actually apply for the job.

### **Information Again**

How, then, can we draw up an accurate, realistic specification of the kind of person required for a particular

job? Only by finding out first exactly what the job consists of. The "job-description" must come before the "job-specification".

Here again we come up against the necessity for accurate and sufficient information. Once we know what a job involves, then, and only then, can we be certain of the demands it makes on the person who does it. For example, to say that a particular job calls for an "intelligent" man does not mean very much. How intelligent must the man be? It is true that we can express intelligence in terms of the average of the general population, but does it help very much to say that he must be of "average intelligence" or "above average intelligence"? Probably many of us have different ideas about what a man of average intelligence is fit for.

But if, on the other hand, we know that throughout the normal working day he will be presented several times with a drawing from which he must gather the dimensions of what he has to make, and that he must set up a machine to cut a piece of metal to that size and shape, then we can lay down that a successful worker must have at least a level of intelligence which will enable him to comprehend these drawings and machine settings. Furthermore, if we know that six out of ten men selected at random cannot be trained for such a job simply because they lack the necessary powers of comprehension, we can lay down that his level of intelligence must not fall below that of sixty out of a hundred of the general population.

This process is simplified, of course, by the use of ability tests, for by their use the mental quickness of new starters can be estimated with some degree of accuracy. If it is found that the failure rate on a job through inability to comprehend its complexities rises rapidly among those whose scores are less than those of sixty

out of a hundred of the general population, then this level of ability can be laid down with confidence as the essential minimum.

The point is, however, that the level of ability required has now been defined operationally. The successful operator must have enough brains—to read a drawing, to set a machine, or what you will. This is a meaningful definition because it lays down a requirement in terms of the work to be done, in a way that everyone can accept. Similarly, if we say that for a particular job a man must have the appearance, manner and address to make a favourable impression when a suburban housewife answers the door to him, we get a much more practically useful idea of what is wanted than if we are simply told that the man required must be “of gentlemanly appearance”.

### **The Study of a Job**

Such “operational definitions” of what is required, which alone are meaningful and useful, depend on knowing all about a job. But it is not always a quick and easy matter to find out all we need to know, even about a job with which we think we are familiar, while if we are presented with a new type of work it can be much more difficult.

The main difficulty often is to get things in their right proportion. Some industrial jobs, for example, have been thought of as “heavy work” because they involve the manipulation of large and bulky objects. But when a close study is made of these jobs it has occasionally been found that the number of times that a weight of, say, more than fifty-six pounds has actually to be lifted is no more than twice in a working day, and that there is usually someone near who lends a hand.



Then again the things which strike an onlooker about a job are not always those which the operator considers important. Most visitors to modern industry comment on the "monotony" of many jobs and think that they must have a deadening effect on the operators. But rightly or wrongly, this is a complaint which one does not often hear from the operators themselves. On one occasion a visitor remarked to a machinist, "Don't you get bored on a monotonous job like this, doing nothing but hemming these same handkerchiefs all day long?" Whereupon the operator replied, "Oh, we're not on the same handkerchiefs all day. Most of this morning I was hemming red ones, then I had a batch of green ones, and now I've got these pale mauve ones. There's plenty of variety."

### **Facts and Figures**

The only reliable method, then, of getting the information is by a quantitative approach. Is the job said to involve heavy work? Then find out the actual weights which have to be lifted and how many times a day this has to be done. Is it said to be monotonous? Then find out how frequently the operation or the operator's position changes. Once we enter this field we are beyond argument, but it is surprising how seldom such a method is used.

Quite a number of things can be expressed in figures if we take the trouble to do so, and many of these figures are already available in existing records. Production figures are usually available in most companies and a little study will show how often the model changes and how output tends to vary over a period. From the same source we can usually find out about the proportion of spoiled work and the number of breakdowns or amount

of waiting time. From figures like these we can build up a picture of the different speeds of learning, the different standards of accuracy, the number of times the machine setting has to be changed and so on.

In some cases, however, figures will not be available and the information about a job will have to be elicited by observation and perhaps special recording. This takes time and sometimes ingenuity but is quite often worth the trouble, for it provides a basis of certainty about a job which can be reached in no other way.

### **Four Headings**

The information for a job description can usually be arranged under the following headings:

#### *(a) The list of duties*

This comprises a straightforward account of what the operator does throughout the working day. It can be made highly detailed and can deal with the smallest motions made by either hand. Or it can be couched in general terms and give only the broad outlines. Common-sense will usually indicate the amount of detail required in any particular case.

#### *(b) Training and skill required*

This should show what standards the operator must have reached before he begins to train for the job, the nature and duration of normal training, and the usual difficulties found by learners. Under this heading it is usually advisable to deal with the causes of failure.

#### *(c) Working conditions*

The work-place should next be dealt with, whether it is indoor or outdoor, its heating, lighting and ventilation. Any special strains imposed upon the operator should be

noted, cramped positions, wet floors, fumes or unpleasantly dirty work. Details of whether the working rhythm is fast or slow, whether people work alone or in teams, whether the work-place is noisy or quiet, and any similar items in the physical environment should also be included.

(d) *Economic conditions*

Lastly the wage rates and total pick-up should be considered, not neglecting such questions as normal hours and the incidence of overtime, holidays with or without pay, and such concealed additions to the wage packet as sickness benefits, welfare provision or employee services.

Once a job is described under these four headings we are in a position to move on to the specification of the person we require to do it. This will be drawn up under our five headings. Perhaps the easiest way to make this clear is to take an actual job, describe it and then draw up the specification.

## DESCRIPTION OF CIGARETTE-PACKING MACHINE OPERATOR'S JOB

(a) *List of duties*

These machines fill packets of twenty cigarettes and are largely automatic. Each machine is operated by a team of three girls known as :

1. The Runner, who is in charge of the machine
2. The Magazine-filler
3. The Packer-up

Their duties are as follows :—

The Magazine-filler must keep the magazine filled with



cigarettes, which she lifts in trays from a rack and slides horizontally from the tray into the magazine.

The Runner must keep the machine supplied with the cardboard "shells" and "slides" which together make up the cigarette packet. At the same time she watches the cigarettes moving through the machine to see that it is working properly and that no damaged ones are being included in the packets.

The Packer-up takes the filled packets as they leave the machine and slips them ten at a time into a cardboard band.

The three girls can exchange jobs throughout the day as they like, except that the Packer-up, who is the most junior, cannot take charge of the machine.

#### *(b) Training and skill required*

New girls pass through an introductory training scheme which is arranged centrally. When they enter the department they spend some time on internal transport work—pushing trolleys with racks of cigarettes about—then they start as packers-up. For the first half-day they are given special attention by a supervisor, then they are left under the charge of the runner. They pick up the other two jobs by observation and practice on the machine.

The skill required is to a small extent manipulative, but there are no great difficulties in handling the cigarettes or packets. They develop some knowledge of the machines, but these are essentially simple from the operator's point of view. All the maintenance and adjustment is done by specially trained mechanics. A good operator, however, can often anticipate mechanical trouble by noticing some small defect and calling the mechanic before anything more serious develops.

Similarly an experienced operator will notice faulty

cigarettes passing through and will pick them out before they are included in a packet.

(c) *Working conditions*

The workroom is light and airy though a little warmer than a normal room because of the necessity to maintain constant temperature and humidity for the tobacco. As they work in teams there is some companionship and conversation. The supervision is sympathetic and the relationships of good quality. The Runner and the Magazine-filler stand at their work and the Packer-up sits, but as they can change places throughout the day each one has an opportunity to sit for part of the working period. There is a little noise from the machines, but it is not excessive.

(d) *Economic conditions*

The standard rate for a girl of 21 is well up to the average for similar work in the same area and in addition to this there is a bonus incentive scheme which yields a substantial extra sum each week. There are sickness benefits, two weeks holiday and six bank holidays with pay in the year, and extra days for long service. The employee services are of a high standard.

Work starts at 7.45 a.m. and ends at 5.30 p.m. daily. Break for lunch is from 12.30 to 1.15 p.m., there are rest pauses and "Music while you Work" morning and afternoon.

From this description it becomes possible to work out the following specification.

## JOB SPECIFICATION FOR A CIGARETTE-PACKING MACHINE OPERATOR

	E Grade	D Grade	C Grade	B Grade	A Grade
FIRST IMPRESSION AND PHYSICAL MAKE-UP		Health Standards good enough to stand most of the day without constituting an absence risk. No disabilities which interfere with hand and arm movements. Personal cleanliness and hygiene of sufficient standard to avoid infection risk. No contact with public, so appearance and manner need only be up to fellow-workers' standards of acceptability.			
QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS.		Secondary modern (elementary) education. No special training or experience needed. This is a clean and well-paid factory job in good conditions, which should meet the expectations of anyone from an artisan to labouring background.			
BRAINS AND ABILITIES		Apart from the few girls required for promotion, this job is purely routine and makes little or no demands on ability of any kind.			
MOTIVATION		Purely conventional aims, little scope for ambition or initiative in the job itself. Work is fairly monotonous, and would be found boring by anyone of high motivation and ability.			
ADJUSTMENT		Little responsibility, except on the part of the Runner. Girls work in teams of three, and must be able to fit in and co-operate with others. Any signs of maladjustment which might lead to trouble with other people would be a disadvantage.			



## SUMMARY

1. Now we have an adequate series of categories by which to classify traits of personality we may set about drawing up a more detailed specification of what we are looking for.

2. That specification must be realistic and it must be based on adequate factual information about the job.

3. Such "operational definitions" of what is required depend on careful study of the work involved, utilising facts and figures so far as they can be made available.

4. We may study a job under the following four headings :

- (a) The list of duties involved.
- (b) The training and skill required.
- (c) The working conditions.
- (d) The economic conditions.

5. An example is given of a job-description and the corresponding job-specification.

## CHAPTER IX

### SUMMING UP AN INDIVIDUAL:

#### THE INTERVIEW AS A CASE HISTORY

Now at last we are ready to deal with the question of summing up a candidate. Perhaps we have taken rather a long time to reach the actual interview, particularly in a book which purports to deal with interviewing, but until we know what we are looking for and have at least some idea of how to set about finding it, we shall not make the best use of our time.

How do we make the best use of our time in the interview? By observing the candidate's manner? By encouraging him to talk about his aspirations? By questioning him about his knowledge of the job? These things have their place but they are not the most important. We shall get most out of an interview when a candidate is talking about what he has done in the past.

#### **Facts Again**

Once again we come back to facts. As has already been pointed out, a great deal of information about an individual can be got from consideration of his interest-pattern. The way he chooses to spend his time will show the kind of things he likes to do, and consequently the sort of job he will be likely to work at with the greatest satisfaction. Likewise when we understand the kind of roles a man has sustained successfully among other people we shall, as we have seen, get some idea of how well-adjusted he is.

Both of these lines of approach, however, must begin on a basis of facts. Unless we know how a man has spent his time we cannot form any impression about his motivation, and until we know the sort of positions he has held in the past we cannot begin to assess the roles he has played. We find ourselves back again, therefore, at the collection of information, this time the facts of our candidate's past life. Our interview must be directed in the first place, therefore, to getting the details of the candidate's biography.

### **Expressive and Adaptive Behaviour**

There is no limit to the use that can be made of an individual's biography. Think, for example, of the expressive behaviour it reveals.

In primitive situations, when we are engaged in a stark struggle to keep alive, human behaviour is primarily adaptive. That is to say, it is aimed almost exclusively at providing us with food, shelter, and the other minimum necessities for human survival. Its significance is eminently practical and utilitarian.

But nowadays, very few of us live in conditions where the struggle for mere physical existence weighs so heavily upon us. In the provision of food, for example, we are not simply concerned with getting the minimum number of calories into our stomachs to sustain life and energy. We can usually pick and choose a little, and eat the things we like best. We can even make a meal something of a social occasion, sitting round a table with a white cloth on it, using china and cutlery, encouraging agreeable conversation, and indulging in other ancillary activities not strictly necessary to the achievement of the principal object of providing ourselves with nourishment.

Now, all the activities which do not conduce directly



to biological survival—this *expressive* rather than *adaptive* behaviour—are highly charged with an individual's own personality. And consequently they are of great significance from the point of view of assessment.

Consider the provision of clothing, for example. In our climate it is necessary to our physical well-being that we should insulate ourselves from the weather by wrapping our bodies in some non-conducting textile material. But when we go to our tailor to order a new suit, we are not so much concerned with the durability and insulating qualities of the cloth we choose, than with its colour, pattern and appearance. Consequently when we appear in our new garments with their broadened shoulders, nicely draped back and kindly concealment of ungraceful protuberances, the behaviour which has led up to this result has been at least as much directed to turning us out according to our ideal of a well-dressed man as it has been to keeping us warm.

In a civilised state, therefore, people's behaviour is largely expressive rather than adaptive, for nearly all of us can at least choose between different ways of providing for our biological needs. Such expressive behaviour usually reflects what the individual considers most important in the situation and consequently is of great value in summing him up.

**“The Fault, Dear Brutus, Lies not in Our Stars . . .”**

While every act, then, is to some extent characteristic and revealing, over a period these acts will form a regular pattern. One person will tend to behave in a fairly consistent way in any set of circumstances. These actions, also, will have an effect on other people and will tend to call out reactions which are equally consistent.

We find, therefore, that other people tend to react to us in quite a characteristic manner, their reactions being just as characteristic as our behaviour. But at the same time we ourselves have a tendency to attribute characteristic reactions to others even when in actual fact there is no objective evidence of these. Such reactions, it is regrettable to observe, are usually a reflection of our own qualities, and our less admirable ones at that.

Suppose, for example, we ask a young man what kind of people he came across in the Services. He may say in reply, "They were all right. I met some very nice chaps. Mind you, some of them were a bit rough at first sight, and I probably wouldn't have come into contact with them in ordinary life. But once one got used to their ways it was surprising to find what good chaps they were; loyal, cheerful, the sort that never let you down. Perhaps I was lucky, but I seemed to come across rather a nice crowd."

A reply like this generally indicates that we are dealing with a sound, well-adjusted young man. His own behaviour towards others has tended to call out friendly, co-operative reactions, while his own agreeable personal qualities tend to make him attribute similar qualities to the people he comes in contact with.

But if we find someone who always seems to meet difficult, awkward people, who is continually being "put upon", and having to stand up for his rights, who gets into rows with others and who has left a number of jobs with a hard-luck story, then we are probably dealing with someone who has a number of defects. His characteristic behaviour probably calls out unfortunate reactions from the people he meets, while at the same time he probably tends to attribute his own unfortunate personal qualities to other people.

We can learn a great deal, then, from the way an individual talks about the people he has lived and worked with, and from the kind of relationships he has maintained with them.

### **How Far Do We Make Our Own Life-History ?**

We express our individuality in our life-history, and we project our personal qualities into it. To a great extent, therefore, we may be said to determine our own life-history by the kind of person we are.

This will be borne out by observation of the world around us, because, old-fashioned though it may seem, the rather dull virtues like honesty, perseverance and a sense of responsibility tend to cause one to stand well with one's fellows and to be entrusted with increasingly important work. On the other hand, the more interesting and fashionable defects, such as a preoccupation with one's own reactions, flippancy, and disloyalty, tend to show themselves up in a life-history where poor relationships, isolation from others and a failure to reach any position of trust are the keynotes.

Surveying an individual's biography from this point of view, therefore, we can see what he has made of his life so far and observe the characteristic personal qualities he has tended to express in it. It is often surprising to see how the same patterns tend to repeat themselves, and how often in different situations and at widely separated times an individual gets himself into the same kind of fix. Truly, I am Mine Own Executioner !

### **Creatures of Circumstance**

At the same time, however, we are moulded by the experiences we pass through and by the environments we live in. The graduates of certain universities, for



example, Old Boys from certain Public Schools and officers of the Regular Services—all these bear the stamp of the community in which they have lived. They take on its values, accept its standards, acquire its manner and, at times rather irritatingly, reiterate its mannerisms. A characteristic specimen can even run so true to type that we can foretell what he is going to say almost every time he opens his mouth.

All this is obvious enough. It is useful, in assessing someone who has lived in a particular environment for many years, to know that he will probably behave in a certain way and try to live up to certain standards of conduct. But there is more in the matter. Certain types of environment seem to encourage satisfactory development of the individual's personal qualities while others seem to militate against it.

In nothing is this more clearly and at times tragically demonstrated than in childhood. Any children's court can show a pathetic little procession of young people who have robbed gas-meters, stolen from shops, broken into warehouses, or rifled purses. When the case-history of these young delinquents is given, the first one may turn out to be the son of a widow, the second of divorced parents; another may be an orphan and the next an illegitimate child. In the majority of cases they have been deprived of the normal home and family background in childhood.

The point is already too well established by evidence extending over many years for there to be any doubt that if a young child is not surrounded with the emotional security and affection provided by a normal happy home, he is likely to have some difficulty in making a satisfactory adjustment to life, and may in extreme cases become a young criminal. Security and affection in the early environment seem to be an emotional

necessity for the satisfactory development of a young personality.

In no other way is the effect of environment so obvious and at times so tragic. But the same point holds good at other periods besides childhood. Some communities have an encouraging and reassuring effect on those who live in them, while others seem to stunt development and suppress spontaneity. If we know the sort of people an individual has lived among, their manners and standards of conduct, we shall have still more clues about the kind of person he is.

### Two Points of View

There may appear to be some conflict between the two points of view put forward above. On the one hand we have suggested that an individual largely determines the circumstances of his own life by his personal qualities. On the other, we have pointed out that a man is to some extent a product of the environment he has lived in and the experiences he has passed through.

Much has been written on these divergent view-points and controversy has raged for many years about whether "heredity" or "environment" determines the individual's life-pattern. Some reflection of this divergence is even apparent in current political theories.

It is no part of our purpose to take sides in this controversy, even supposing the question could be settled at all by a simple decision on one side or the other. The truth of the matter is, of course, that there is a great deal to be said on both sides. The interaction between an individual's innate endowments and the opportunities and experience provided by the outside world is extremely delicate and complex. In one case it may be clear that a young man has created opportunities and moulded



circumstances for himself, while in another it may be equally clear that he has remained largely passive while the events of his life have had their way with him. Between such extremes there will be all kinds of intermediate cases.

From either point of view, however, for our purpose the individual's past life remains important as a source of information about his personal qualities. Whether we think of what he has made of his life or what life has made of him, we can consider his past history as a series of phases, each of which has provided him with opportunities to do well or badly according to its own particular standards, while at the same time it has had its own characteristic effect on him.

### **Family Life in Childhood**

When considering these phases we must find out first what are the criteria of success or failure in each, and then think of the sort of qualities which such success demands. At the same time we must decide about the kind of emotional atmosphere which is characteristic of that phase, the standards of value and conduct which prevail there, and the sort of effect they would have on the individual.

Take the home background, for example. We have already drawn attention to the serious effects which a broken home may have on a child's emotional development. Conversely, a happy home where parents and children are on affectionate terms and where the economic circumstances are above the poverty line, will provide a background of material and emotional security during the most formative years. This alone seems to engender self-confidence, and the powers of successful adjustment to more complex situations as they are presented during adolescence and in adult life.



At the same time, early life in the family accustoms the child to certain standards of conduct and manners. In a home where Father's omission to embrace Mother when he leaves for the office in the morning means that there is a major row going on, a child will grow up with an entirely different notion of what constitutes gentleness and courtesy in social relations than if he constantly hears harsh words and recriminations exchanged between his parents. Similarly with economic standards. To a child brought up in a well-to-do background, the lack of a car may constitute dire poverty, while on another level of income a bedroom to oneself may represent the height of affluence.

Standards of social prestige will also be instilled at this time, related largely to the father's job and income level. The family of a skilled artisan will usually come to consider unskilled or labouring work beneath them socially, in the same way as the son of a professional man might hesitate about going in for trade or industry.

### School Life

At school a child has his first opportunity of trying himself out amongst others and having his achievements compared with external standards of success or failure. The criteria are fairly simple.

Success in school work can be judged by the place in class, or by the passing of examinations, while in the other sides of school life it may be estimated by the place gained in school teams or other activities, and by school offices or positions held.

The qualities required to gain success by these standards are also easy to decide. Examinations cannot be passed without either a quick and accurate mind, or steady application, or both. Success in team games



requires agility and stamina and also the ability to take the proper role in a somewhat stressful social situation. Boys are not appointed Prefects or Captains of Houses unless they impress their masters as having some sense of responsibility and a reasonably good influence over their fellows.

When a boy's school record is considered on these lines, therefore, and his performance in the school environment considered against these simple and obvious criteria of success, it will show not only the use he has made of his opportunities and the standards of achievement he has set himself and reached, but also something of the personal qualities he has displayed in the process.

Schools, of course, vary in their standards. To become Captain of cricket in one may mean less than to gain House Colours in another. Similarly the standards of acceptable conduct may differ while the scope and opportunities for achievement are noticeably greater in some schools than in others. Different boys will react to these conditions in different ways, but even when all these factors are taken into account, the school record can be very revealing when adequate information is gained about it.

### **Other Aspects of the Life-History**

Further education, service in the armed forces and working life each represent another scene in which an individual can choose his own part to a great extent. In each one he can reach different levels of achievement in relation to the accepted standards of success.

It is unnecessary to consider these all in detail here, except to point out that the following stages must be gone through. First, we must know what are the criteria of success in each situation. In some cases they will be easy to understand, as in the case of examinations at school



or rank in the Forces. In others it may be more difficult as in the case of industry where we must find out something about the comparative levels of remuneration, the number of people in charge, the responsibility of the work and so on.

Next we must try to understand what kind of qualities are represented by these standards of success. In some cases intelligence and application may be sufficient. In others the more subtle qualities of influence, the ability to impress others and "put oneself across" may be required. There may even be others where success can only be achieved by the exercise of qualities which on a wider analysis are somewhat unattractive or actively anti-social.

Thirdly, we must find out what the individual has actually done, what responsibility he has carried, what positions he has held, how long he stayed in them and under what circumstances he left. When we get all these elements in the situation clear in our minds we shall know a good deal about our candidate and his personal qualities.

Outside working hours most of us can exercise a wider freedom of choice about what we do. Leisure pursuits can thus be a valuable element in a life-story for our purpose of assessing personal qualities.

In such activities the criteria of successful participation may be more difficult to understand, and an interviewer may have to be very adroit to get a clear picture of what the activity involves and what demands it makes. Nevertheless it is usually fairly easy to see when a candidate chooses to spend his time in an undirected and aimless manner. In such cases we shall probably conclude that his motivation is doubtful.

But if a candidate chooses to pursue some activity with



any sense of purpose we are presented with a field of endeavour in leisure time which again has criteria of successful participation, and shows the use of specific personal qualities. When we have the facts about an individual's spare-time life we can survey yet another aspect of his history and note what qualities it seems to disclose.

### **The Aim of the Interview**

All the inferences and assessments to which we have pointed in this chapter depend on a knowledge of the facts about an individual's life-history. Consequently the best use we can make of an interview is to assemble these facts, to elicit the details of his biography, to build up as complete a case-history as we can.

This may sound pedestrian and time-consuming, and indeed it involves a great deal of painstaking hard work. But it is only on these grounds of fact that a satisfactory assessment can be built. And in eliciting them we are losing nothing.

When a candidate is recounting the facts of his life he will at the same time disclose his attitudes and aspirations. Once he has given us all the details of his school record we shall not have to ask if he enjoyed his period there. His tone of voice and manner of speaking will have told us that, even though his standards of achievement may leave us in doubt.

The aim of the interview, then, is to establish a factual case-history. With this clearly in mind we can now think about how to elicit the facts of an individual's biography.

## SUMMARY

1. An individual's life-history is full of clues about his personal qualities, partly because he expresses himself in it and partly because his account of it will be tinged with his own attitudes.

2. At the same time the environments and experiences through which he has passed will have contributed to making him what he is.

3. From both these points of view, therefore, we can learn a great deal about someone when we build up his case-history.

4. Each aspect of it can be considered as a sphere of endeavour in which success by the appropriate criterion can be achieved by the exercise of certain personal qualities.

5. When we understand an individual's levels of achievement in these different spheres we can assess what kind of personal qualities he has shown.

6. This will depend on adequate information about his life-history. Consequently the best use we can make of an interview is to elicit the facts of a candidate's biography.

## CHAPTER X

### INTERVIEW METHOD :

#### GETTING THE CANDIDATE TO TALK

Now that the aim of the interview is clear, the general lines of the method should begin to become apparent. The candidate must talk about himself. Everything, therefore, that encourages a candidate to be communicative in an interview is right, whereas everything that tends to dry him up is wrong. In essence it is almost as simple as that.

Almost, but not quite ; because our candidate may not always talk about the things that are most significant. Before we approach the subject of encouraging a candidate to talk frankly and confidently it may be worth while to remind ourselves about what we want to hear from him.

We want to hear a full and factual account of his life-history, for this is the information which we must arrange and interpret to give a complete picture of him.

#### **What the Candidate Talks About**

There are various things a candidate can tell us about himself, not all of which are of equal value. He can, for example, give us his views on life in general and current events in particular. These may be very interesting, and if they conform sufficiently closely to our own prejudices and pre-conceptions we may be inclined to agree with him. We may even be drawn into an interesting and instructive discussion. Provided that the candidate has enough wit to appear interested in what we are saying and allow himself



to be instructed, we may end up with the impression that he is an intelligent and well-informed young man with a great future before him. In actual fact, however, we may have found out nothing at all about him, while he has encouraged us to talk ourselves into giving him the appointment. Many interviews finish up like this when the interviewer talks too much and listens too little.

Again, a candidate may talk about his own aspirations with special regard to the position for which he is being considered. This may sound more valuable, but actually it can be just as full of pitfalls. Every candidate who really wants a job can talk with great conviction about his liking for that particular kind of work and his peculiar interest in the contribution it makes to human progress. He will not necessarily be trying to deceive the interviewer. But his mind has been running on this position for some time; he probably has a number of optimistic ideas about it and has painted a pretty attractive picture for himself of the future it offers him. Again, the unwary interviewer may be unduly impressed by a young man's appearance of ability and enthusiasm simply because he talks well about his ambitions and aspirations.

In spite of a fairly widespread belief that an experienced man can sum up a candidate by some intuitive process in a relatively short time, we must get at the facts of a candidate's previous history; and we must go into it as thoroughly and in as great detail as is possible in the time available. The more he tells about what he has done and where he has lived, the more significant facts we shall have about him, and it is upon facts alone that a sound assessment can be established.

Attitudes and aspirations are significant and important. So are a candidate's reactions and impressions of what he has done. But in the writer's opinion it is a mistake to go

directly towards these matters in an interview. When a candidate tells us in detail about what he has done in the past it is usually quite clear whether he has found satisfaction in it or not. There is no need to ask about attitudes and aspirations when a candidate is talking freely about the significant happenings of his life. In a well-conducted interview they are thrown in, as it were, without extra charge.

### **The Conditions of Loquacity**

Once we know what we want to get at, we can consider the means of encouraging a candidate to talk. As we have said, anything that stimulates a candidate to talk frankly, freely and confidently about his life-history is right in the interview, while anything which tends to dry him up is wrong. It may be easier to consider the second point first. What are the conditions which tend to inhibit a candidate from talking freely about himself?

Oddly enough, perhaps, the first is often lack of opportunity. Some interviewers are so preoccupied with themselves that they have little or no attention left over for the candidate. They talk too much and don't listen enough. When the candidate mentions his school-days, they launch into reminiscences of their own education and recount at some length how they won one of the first National Certificates ever issued. When war service is mentioned they call to mind their own experiences in the 1914-18 campaigns and explain their own part in that struggle. Not only does the candidate get little encouragement to talk about his own background, he sometimes has little opportunity to get a word in, between the paragraphs of his interviewer's flow of autobiography.

Such an instance may sound comic, and in fact it is very amusing to overhear. But the writer has had the opportunity in tutorial work of listening to several hundred



interviews during the last seven years, and some of them have come remarkably near it. Without being crudely autobiographical, however, some interviewers are pre-occupied with themselves in other ways.

Some are laudably anxious that the conditions of employment should be adequately set before the candidate, and are so concerned to seize the right moment for a disquisition on the pension scheme that they miss the point of what the candidate has been saying. Others take such anxious care in the framing of their questions that they scarcely notice the answers. For example, an interviewer may be concerned to find out whether the candidate has any feelings about the purpose of his work. He may frame his question thus: "Do you consider it more important to have a job which contributes obviously to the betterment of social conditions, than that it should merely bring you in a satisfactory immediate remuneration?"—A very well-phrased and important question.

The unfortunate thing, however, is that in real life questions like that often elicit no more than a monosyllabic "Yes" in reply, and the interviewer, who has already devoted a great deal of attention to thinking out his question, has to start again and think out another.

### **Candidate-Centred Interviewing**

In such cases, far too much of the interviewer's attention is being absorbed by himself, his framing of the questions and his general handling of the situation. He is like someone learning to ride a bicycle whose mind is fixed entirely on the movements of his arms and legs and who hasn't time to watch where he is going. All this attention should be on the candidate, and the interviewer's interjections should be confined to the minimum necessary to keep him on the right lines.



It is always interesting to note the relative amounts contributed to the conversation by the interviewer and the candidate. In a good assessment interview the candidate should talk for at least 75% of the time and the interviewer for not more than 25%. In fact, the best interviews often consist of what is practically a monologue by the candidate punctuated only by encouraging noises by the interviewer—"Oh's" and "Ah's" or "That must have been interesting"—with an occasional move to another subject, such as "And then what did you do?" or "Tell me something about your next job."

Not only does this approach to the interview ensure that the interviewer's attention is centred on the candidate, it also provides the most suitable atmosphere for encouraging the candidate to talk. Most of us can talk reasonably well when we are assured of an interested and attentive audience, but few can do themselves justice when confronted with a preoccupied official to whom we are quite obviously no more than an unimportant and rather tiresome incident in his day's work.

### **The Candidate's Reaction**

Action and reaction are equal and opposite according to the physical scientists. Something of the same is true in the interaction of personalities. If we treat people unsympathetically and aggressively it is more than likely that they will react with hostility, either open, or veiled in a cold defensive manner.

Thus, if we begin an interview by allowing it to appear too obvious that we are out to get the facts of the case; if we adopt a hard-boiled, suspicious, "You can't kid me" kind of manner, we shall probably cause the candidate to close up, to weigh each word and to be careful and guarded in what he tells us about himself.

Now, as was said above, anything which tends to inhibit a candidate and to prevent him from talking frankly and confidently about himself is wrong in the interview. If the interviewer's manner contributes to a defensive attitude on the candidate's part, he must change it and try to be encouraging and sympathetic. Though he may be thinking all the time about how the information given by the candidate fits together, he should not let it appear that he is considering each remark carefully and deciding on its credibility. Incidentally, most candidates tell the truth. They may try to put the best face on their achievements or they may tend to gloss over their failures, but that is quite legitimate and to be expected, and allowance can easily be made for it. Very few indeed will tell a direct lie about their past life. Those who do so generally make rather a poor show of it, because they find it so obviously difficult to fit the falsehood into the rest of the picture that it becomes remarkably easy to detect.

### **The Reception of Information**

This impression of sympathy and encouragement is usually made or marred by the way an interviewer receives information. If a candidate's account of his school-days is heard in judicial silence or with a deliberate "Yes, I see", it will be obvious at once that what he has said is being weighed up. But if, on the other hand, the interviewer responds with an encouraging "Good", "That was interesting", or "That sounds a good show" (provided, of course, that it doesn't represent flat failure) the impression of being under scrutiny will be greatly mitigated.

In the writer's experience, most interviewers in this country could try to appear much more interested and



sympathetic without incurring any suspicion of being gushing or insincere. Many people are quite unaware of how discouraging and judicial their manner appears to the candidate. When their attention has been drawn, at the close of a practice interview, to the fact that they have received quite an intimate piece of information with poised pencil and calculating frown, then said "Humph" and made a note, they are rather stunned. After a moment's reflection they say, "Yes, you are quite right. I was only thinking, of course, but I hadn't realised what it would look like to the candidate."

### Criticism

Few things can freeze up the stream of information more quickly than the cold wind of criticism. As soon as the candidate gets the idea that the interviewer disapproves of what he has done, he will stop talking frankly and confidently about himself and will begin saying what he thinks the interviewer would like to hear. The interviewer must remember, therefore, that he is not sitting in moral judgment on the candidate. He is there first and foremost to find out the facts, and if he betrays his reaction to facts he does not approve of, he will run a grave risk of not getting any more.

This is not always easy to avoid. A young girl applying for a factory job, for example, when asked about her spare time, may tell the interviewer that she goes to the cinema three nights a week, goes dancing on two, spends another washing her hair and another going for a walk with the current boy-friend. The interviewer may feel, with some justification, that this shows a remarkably passive and unconstructive pattern of interests. But if he says "Dear me, is that all you can find to do in your spare time?" or if his manner indicates that such thoughts are going



through his mind, the young thing will say to herself in effect "The old so-and-so. What's it got to do with him, anyhow," and her replies from then on will be of the "Yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir," order.

### **The Right Atmosphere**

The interviewer is trying, therefore, to build up a friendly, encouraging atmosphere, so that the candidate will be as little aware as possible that what he says is being weighed up and subjected to criticism. Once we know what we are aiming at, it is not usually difficult to achieve it. What, then, are the means of establishing such an atmosphere? Let us look first at the physical surroundings.

Most interviews are prefaced by a period in a waiting-room, and some waiting-rooms are calculated to chill the stoutest heart. Bentwood chairs, a deal table covered with copies of "The Practical Gasfitter and Plumbing Journal" for 1933, the walls adorned with a photograph of the founder of the firm, whose Victorian severity of countenance is hardly relieved by his luxuriant whiskers, and another of the works trip to Blackpool in 1906; all these are presided over by a lady whose suspicion of the outside world is only matched by her dislike of being disturbed.

A short period in this sort of surroundings and atmosphere will ensure that the candidate is in quite the worst frame of mind for interviewing. If he is then conducted into a noisy office where several people are at work, conversations are interrupted by the telephone, while a typewriter clacks in a corner, he will be bewildered and ill-at-ease. The final touch will be to seat him in front of a large desk guarded with IN and OUT trays, box-files and works of reference so that the owner's head is only just

visible as through a loophole in the fortifications, and then to expect him to talk freely, frankly, and confidently about himself.

Commonsense will show how unsuitable conditions like these are. It should not be impossible to arrange a reasonably pleasant waiting-room and a room for interviewing which is informal, suitably furnished and above all free from interruptions.

### **The Uniqueness of the Interview Situation**

External surroundings can play a significant part in creating the wrong atmosphere, but when all the unsuitable notes in the waiting-room, the interviewer's desk and the seating arrangements have been silenced, the atmosphere will not necessarily come right all of a sudden. Even the right hand of friendship, the smile of welcome and the proffered cigarette (*pace* Mr. Dale Carnegie) cannot be guaranteed of themselves to start an interview off on the right foot.

This may seem a little hard after the list of things to avoid which has been given above, and it may tend to give the impression that interviewing is too mysterious and difficult for the ordinary person. Such an impression would be quite erroneous because most people can be trained to give quite an adequate interview in a reasonably short time.

The point to be stressed, however, is that there is no trick or technique which will ensure that every interview goes well. The standard formula of welcome, the plan of prepared questions, the stereotyped gesture of hospitality—these are much more likely to ruin the atmosphere of an interview than to improve it, because any such routine approach suffers from two serious drawbacks. In the first place the formula may be trotted out just when the cir-



cumstances are least favourable for its reception, and in the second any such stereotyped questions and remarks tend to sound highly artificial on the lips of the interviewer.

Have you ever noticed how many jokes have their origin in such stereotyped sayings? Think of small children lining up after a party to take leave of their hostess. One after another they shake hands and say "Good night. Thank you for having me. I've had a lovely time", or some such variant on the standard formula. It does not need the occasional lapse into "Mummy says I've enjoyed myself very much" to make an already amusing scene more than a little comic. Similarly with the salesman's hearty opening "Good morning, madam. I represent the so-and-so company and I'm happy to be able to tell you. . . ."

Each interview is a unique situation with its own peculiarities. It must be treated as such, the interviewer being alive to the varying needs of the situation, and being ready to do what it requires of him without relying on artificial aids, standard jokes, or set speeches of welcome.

Two qualities help an individual to deal adequately with an interview. One is a real interest in people and a sincere respect for personality. If the interviewer is aware of each candidate's essential humanity and of his own privileged position in prying into other people's lives, then his realisation of the obligations of discretion and tactfulness which this imposes upon him will steer him past the dangers of stiffness and artificiality. But if he thinks of his candidate as so much raw material, merely as a "body" he has to work on, this attitude will inevitably make itself apparent in his handling of the situation, and he will be a bad interviewer.



## Conversational Dexterity

The second quality is that which enables someone to produce the right remark, in the right tone, at the right moment. Some people possess this gift of "conversational dexterity" in a high degree. Every interviewer must somehow reach a certain standard.

The happy remark which establishes contact with the candidate quickly and starts the interview off smoothly may come with practice, or it may depend on the inspiration of the moment. It will never be a stereotyped opening gambit. The quickest start to an interview that has so far come within the writer's experience happened during the fuel crisis of February, 1947. There was little or no heating in the building and there was snow on the ground outside. It went like this :

*Interviewer* : Come in. Isn't it a shocking morning (it was, too !). Did you have any difficulty in getting here ?

*Candidate* : No, as a matter of fact, I didn't. I came from Blankston on the Western Line and that doesn't seem to be affected much by the weather.

*Interviewer* : That's very fortunate. Have you always lived there ?

*Candidate* : Yes, I was born there. My father was Headmaster of the Grammar School. . . .

Two exchanges arising out of an obvious remark about the weather, and the candidate is already well started on his home and family background. Quite probably there was a large element of luck in this, but the interviewer was sufficiently deft to make his opening remark do two jobs. It established a friendly relationship with the candidate and at the same time led him to refer to his place of

residence. The next remark was equally well judged and carried the candidate on to the beginning of his case-history.

Throughout the course of the interview the same deftness is required. At times a soothing remark will be called for to gloss over something about which a candidate is a little self-conscious—"Well, yes, I can quite see that you would be very disappointed—", while at times encouragement and stimulation will be wanted.

### **Steering the Interview**

Perhaps the main difficulty is to establish contact with the candidate and to get him talking freely as quickly as possible. But once he is started we have to take him over the ground as thoroughly as we can without waste of time. Sometimes this will call for a remark which encourages him to go into greater detail—"Tell me, what were your actual duties in that position—" and sometimes for one which will get him on to another subject. It is always advisable to deflect a candidate as little as possible from the course of his narrative and to guide him unobtrusively on to the next subject.

A deft remark can sometimes do this with remarkable success. In one interview the candidate was talking with some emphasis about how hard he worked; Saturdays, Sundays, evenings throughout the week, all seemed much the same to him. The interviewer listened to this strong line being shot for some time, then interposed mildly "That won't leave you much time for playing Rugger" (Rugger being one of the interests the candidate had listed on his form). Without a pause the candidate explained that in spite of his devoted attention to duty he managed occasionally to snatch a couple of hours on a Saturday to play for the Company team. The deft

remark had switched him from his work history to his spare time life, with no break in the continuity and without his noticing that the direction had been changed.

### **Tempo in Interviewing**

Lack of deftness in conversation quickly allows the interview to drag and may even cause it to degenerate into a cross-examination.

"Where did you go to school?"

"West Central Elementary."

"How old were you when you left?"

"Fourteen."

"What was your best subject?"

"Arithmetic."

This kind of thing is the very nadir of interviewing. So long as the ding-dong of terse question and one-word response continues there is no contact between interviewer and candidate, no chance of the latter talking freely and confidently, no likelihood of the former getting more than the absolute minimum of information which will satisfy each bald question.

Questions like these call for the answers they get, and unless the interviewer can so frame his questions that the candidate will be encouraged to talk with some spontaneity and confidence and thus lead him to provide the facts he wants, in their setting and with their overtones, the interview will remain lifeless, pedestrian and thoroughly unsatisfactory—and it will take an unnecessarily long time.

Though we are not concerned at the moment with the short interview, time is always an important factor. There is practically never an unlimited amount at our disposal, and in industry it is usually a matter of putting a short period to the best use. It is essential in such cases



that the candidate be taken over the ground rapidly, and this will never be done when every detail has to be dug out by specific questions. Cross-examinations are always slow and usually unsatisfactory.

Good tempo depends on contact being established rapidly, because until candidate and interviewer "click" the interview has not really begun. In some interviews there is a definite moment when this establishment of contact takes place. The candidate becomes suddenly confidential and says "Well, you see, it was like this. . . ." From then on he is talking confidently and freely. Up till then he is merely answering questions. When contact is established the candidate should pour out the facts in their proper order and in the right amount of detail. This can only happen when the interviewer is deft enough to set him at his ease with a few well-judged and friendly words to begin with. Later it is a matter of making each of his remarks perform the double function of encouraging the flow of information and turning it in the directions which the interviewer requires.

### **"Two Ears, but only One Mouth"**

One can never lay down beforehand what the right remark will be. At times it may be no more than an interested murmur. At times it may be an encouragement to go into greater detail—"Tell me a little more about that." At times it may be a stimulation to move on to the next phase—"And what did you do after that?" The interviewer must rely on his wits and his awareness of the situation to tell him what to say.

Generally speaking, however, the right remarks are short ones. Long-winded questions, garrulous comment and painstaking verification of minor details, these almost invariably slow down the tempo and let the relationship

between interviewer and candidate deteriorate, while at the same time they seldom get at the information one wants.

It is worth while remembering that the interviewer is there first and foremost to listen and not to talk. "The less said, the more heard", like the owl in the verse. Each time he opens his mouth what he says should be effective, but he should open it as little as possible. The candidate is there to do the talking.

## SUMMARY

1. The aim of the interview is to encourage the candidate to give a factual account of his life-history. Attitudes and aspirations will then be uncovered incidentally.

2. A candidate will only talk freely, frankly and confidently about himself if he feels that he has a sympathetic listener. The interviewer's attention must, therefore, be centred on the candidate, and his manner be sympathetic and encouraging.

3. The reception of information and the avoidance of implied criticism will help to induce the right atmosphere in an interview.

4. The physical surroundings of the interview must be such as to promote a good atmosphere, but they will not themselves ensure it.

5. The interviewer must rely on his own conversational deftness and his awareness of the needs of the situation to build up the proper relationship. The same qualities will enable him to take the candidate over the ground rapidly and in sufficient detail.

6. Lack of conversational deftness, or the reliance on stereotyped formulas, are usually the cause of slow tempo in an interview, or even of its degenerating into a cross-examination.



## CHAPTER XI

### PUTTING THE PATTERN TOGETHER : THE COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION OF INFORMATION

By now we are quite clear about what we are looking for, and we know in general terms how to discover it in an interview. There may still be some loose ends to tie up about the purpose and method of interviewing, however, and we have not yet dealt with the putting together of the information elicited into a complete assessment of the candidate. It seems advisable at this point, therefore, to give an account of a full-length interview, in the hope that it will give a little more reality to what has been said about the method of conducting an interview, while at the same time it will serve as a basis for showing how the assessment process is carried out.

We shall take a simple and straightforward case, leaving out such complications as war or National Service. Let us imagine ourselves confronted with a young man, friendly and confident in manner, whose test-score shows him to be in the top one per cent of the population for general intelligence and who has filled up the application form shown in Fig. 6. We are considering him for employment as assistant to the Development Manager of a Plastics firm, the job-specification being broadly as follows :

	E Grade	D Grade	C Grade	B Grade	A Grade
FIRST IMPRESSION AND PHYSICAL MAKE-UP				Able to mix easily with middle and senior management levels. Fit enough to stand up to a busy and active life which imposes a nervous, rather than a physical strain.	
QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTA- TIONS					Honours degree in chemistry and experience in the manufacture of plastics. Aiming at higher management position.
BRAINS AND ABILITIES					The level of ability required to gain the above qualifications covers this point.
MOTIVATION				Essential that he should set himself high but realistic goals and show persistence, originality, and determination in overcoming obstacles which stand between him and the successful carrying out of his plan.	
ADJUSTMENT				Capable of sustaining a responsible role and making himself acceptable to those with whom he works, both within the department and outside. Some powers of leadership in the integrative sense.	

Now for the interview. This, of course, is not an actual case and bears no direct resemblance to anyone the writer has ever interviewed. It is, however, quite a probable case-study within its setting.

*Interviewer.* Good morning. Come and sit down. Now, you know something about this job and you will realise that it's rather an important one from the company's point of view. From your own point of view as well it is important that you shouldn't go into something you're not going to make a success of and find a satisfactory life in. We want therefore to take a bit of trouble about this appointment and to make sure that we come to the right decision about it.

So first of all I'd like to find out something about you, what you've done in the past and so on. Would you mind, then, telling me about yourself?

*Candidate :* Not at all. Where would you like me to begin?

*I.* Well, suppose we start at the beginning. I see you're living in Nottingham now. Have you always lived there?

*C.* No. As a matter of fact I've only been there for about three years. I came from the West Country originally.

*I.* Where did you spend your early days?



Fig. 6.

## CONFIDENTIAL

*Personal History Sheet*

SURNAME (BLOCK CAPITALS): SMITH CHRISTIAN NAMES: JOHN

ADDRESS: 119 SMITH STREET, NOTTINGHAM SINGLE

AGE: 25 HEIGHT: 5' 11" WEIGHT: 12.7

## MEDICAL HISTORY:

(Disability, serious illness, operations, etc.) *No illness or serious absence since infancy.*

## GENERAL EDUCATION:

Name of school, colleges or universities attended

Scholarships won; examinations passed; degrees and diplomas gained, with subjects taken

*Downside Road Elementary.  
Westland County Secondary.  
Bristol University.**Scholarship to Secondary Grammar School  
School Certificate: 3 distinctions  
5 credits  
Higher School Certificate: Maths  
Chemistry  
Physics  
B.Sc. 1st class Honours, Chemistry.  
M.Sc.*

INTERESTS AND SPARE TIME ACTIVITIES: e.g. games played; membership of clubs, societies, religious bodies, etc.; preference in cinema, theatre, reading, B.B.C. programmes, etc.

Offices or other positions held in any of these clubs

*Football, cricket and athletics**University Chemistry Society  
Amateur dramatics; reading, current affairs and technical literature**School Colours and  
University Blue  
President*

## PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

	DATES	EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS	TYPE OF BUSINESS	POSITION HELD WITH NUMBERS OF STAFF UNDER CONTROL	ACTUAL DUTIES (GIVE FAIRLY FULL DETAILS)	REASONS FOR LEAVING
Present position :		<i>National Plastics Co.</i>	<i>Manufacture of plastic articles</i>	<i>Dept. Manager 150</i>	<i>Supervision of processes and production. Staff control. Planning of production changes, etc.</i>	<i>Still employed</i>
Previous positions in order back to first position :		"	"	<i>Chemist</i>	<i>Supervision of routine testing of materials and finished product. Process control, some development and research work</i>	<i>Advancement</i>

C. I was born in Somerset but I don't remember much about that, because when I was three my father got a job in Bristol and we moved there.

I. Oh, yes. What did he do?

C. He was in the Post Office. In Somerset he was Head Postmaster in a small town, then he was posted to an administrative job in Bristol.

*Civil Service  
background*

I. That was a very secure job, of course.

C. Oh, yes, he's been there ever since. Of course he's getting on a bit now, but it is a good service. They look after their people.

*History of secure  
employment of  
father. Probably  
lower middle in-  
come group.*

I. Many in your family?

C. One brother and one sister. Three of us altogether.

*Family of three.*

I. Where do you come in the family?

C. I'm the youngest.

*Youngest child.*

I. Tell me, what sort of things do you remember of your childhood? Are they mainly happy memories?

C. Oh yes, it was a very happy home. Mind you, we weren't very well off, but my father was in a secure job and my mother managed very well, so we never went short of anything. Then there was a lot of fun with my brother and sister. We lived a little outside the city itself and we could always roam about in the country.

*Economic secur-  
ity in the home up  
to lower middle  
income grade.*

(1)

*No signs of emo-  
tional insecurity,  
broken home or  
poor relation-  
ships.*

I. Parents still alive?



C. Yes.

I. Now tell me about your education. Where did you go to school?

C. Downside Road School first of all. That was an ordinary elementary school in Bristol.

I. How did you get on there?

C. Not badly. In fact I was rather bright, usually top of the class. I got a scholarship to go on to a Secondary School.

*Good achievement in classes at elementary school.*

I. Were there any organised games there?

C. No, nothing much. We used to play football among ourselves in the playground, and sometimes we had matches against other schools, but there was very little beyond that.

I. Did you take any part?

C. Oh yes, I played in the football team. In fact I was captain before I left. But it was all pretty small-scale stuff.

(2)  
(3) (4)  
*Evidence of good participation in school activities.*

I. Tell me about your next school.

C. That was one of the County Secondary Schools. I went there on the scholarship and my father let me stay on until I was seventeen. They were very good about education, my parents, because, although we weren't badly off, it was a bit of a struggle to educate the three of us.

*Confirmation of home income limits.*

I. How did you get on at school work?

C. Pretty well. I sat School Certificate when I was fifteen and got three distinctions and five credits.

(5)  
*Good scholastic achievement.*

I. What were the distinctions in?

C. Maths, physics and chemistry. Credits in English, French and History and I forget what else—Oh, Scripture was one.

*Mainly on science subjects.*

I. The Science subjects were your best ones, were they? Did you like them best?

C. Oh, yes. They seemed to come quite easily to me, even then, though I liked the more literary subjects too. But I carried on with Maths and Science and took Higher School Certificate in them when I was seventeen. I got one or two prizes in them as well.

*All-round interest in school work.*

I. What prizes?

C. Oh, a thing called the David Elsmere prize for the best pupil in mathematics for the year, and a bursary for the best science pupil. Then I got a County major scholarship to take me on to the University, and there were some class prizes too, of course.

(6)  
*Above-average school achievement.*

I. That sounds pretty impressive. Did you take any part in other school activities?

C. Well, I played football and cricket, of course.

(7)  
*Evidently a very distinguished pupil with a noticeable leaning towards the Sciences.*

I. Did you get your colours?

C. Yes. I was captain of the

(8) (9)  
*Good participation*



cricket eleven and I got colours for football. I did some running also.

I. What was your distance?

C. Mainly short distances. Hundred yards and two-twenty. I was Victor Ludorum in the school games the year I left.

I. What about school offices? Were you a prefect?

C. Yes. As a matter of fact I was Head Boy in my last year, and Captain of my House.

I. Anything else going on at school?

C. Well, let me see. We had a Science Society, where we used to read papers, and try to get people from outside to lecture.

I. What part did you take in that?

C. Well, I was Secretary and President and I read one or two papers. Then we had a Dramatic Society; I played one or two parts in that, not leads, just minor parts. Oh yes, and I sang in the school choir until my voice broke.

I. You seem to have done pretty well all round at school. How does it appear to you now when you look back? Do you think you made the most of your opportunities?

C. On the whole yes, I think so. Of course, looking back from this dis-

*tion in school games.*

(10)

*Good achievement in athletics.*

(11)

(12) (13) (14)

*Another leadership role, with considerable responsibility attached.*

(15)

*Wide interest in school activities.*

(16) (17)

*Another leadership role.*

(18)

(19)

*General impression of all round success at school.*



tance one can always see how one could have done better—or done just as well with less wear and tear. But I enjoyed school. They were a very decent set of chaps in my year, and we had some very good men among the masters. I think the Head Master must have been rather a remarkable man. He got a lot out of us, and I think he must have got more things going than was usual in a school of that type—games and school societies, I mean. I was quite glad to leave when the time came, because I felt I'd had enough of school, but while I was there I think I made the most of it.

I. Yes, it sounds as though you did. Now tell me, what did you intend to do when you left school? Had you any plans?

C. I wanted to make a career for myself in applied science, and to get one of the big jobs in industry. Like most schoolboys, I expect, I saw myself as an inventor or the discoverer of a new process, or something rather big like that.

I. Well, how has it worked out? The University was the first stage, I suppose.

C. That's right. I thought I'd just about got enough with my scholarship and prizes to get me through, with a bit of luck and some jobs during

*Evidence of good adjustment to both masters and boys.*  
(20)

*Objective outlook.*

*Fair reality-content in his aspirations. How far has he succeeded in working this out in practice?*

*Seems to have financed himself from now on.*

vacations. So I went up to Bristol University when I was about eighteen and worked for a degree in chemistry.

*I.* How did that go?

*C.* Pretty well. I was excused most of the Inter B.Sc. through having Higher Schools and in the final I got first-class Honours. After that I got a scholarship which gave me a further year, and I took an M.Sc. My thesis was highly commended and I thought of going on for a Ph.D., but I decided to take a job instead.

(21)

*Good achievement academically.*

(22)

(23)

*Distinguished academic achievement.*

*I.* It sounds as though you did pretty well academically.

*C.* Yes, I suppose I did, really. I think I was lucky in being one of rather a small department in which we were on very good terms with the staff. My professor took a great interest in my work, and gave me a tremendous lot of help. It was he who wanted me to work for a doctorate, and I think he might have given me a place on the staff while I was working for it. I owe a lot to him, really.

*Objective outlook.*

(24)

(25)

*Signs of good social adjustment and participation.*

*I.* Now, apart from work, what kind of part did you play in the life of the University? Did you carry on with any games?

*C.* I played football in the winter, but I gave up cricket, partly because I hadn't enough time and partly because I thought I wasn't really up to Univer-

*Team games again.*

sity standard. I took up athletics instead in the summer.

I. Did you have any success?

C. I got my blue for football, and I was in the University Athletics team.

I. A double blue?

C. Well, it wasn't really as good as it sounds. I played football pretty regularly and I was up rather longer than most. And though I wasn't brilliant as a sprinter, I was quite useful in the middle distances in the team. I didn't break any records.

I. What else did you do?

C. Well, let me see. I was President of the Athletics Section for one year, and I was on the Rag Day Committee—you know, organising the Hospitals Day nonsense. I was on the Union Committee, and I took a not-very-active part in politics. During my last year I rather gave up that sort of thing, and I took part only in the affairs of the Chemistry Society. That was a sort of meeting ground for the staff of the department and the more serious-minded students. I was Secretary and then President of it.

I. Anything else during those years?

C. Well, let me think. I had a few jobs during vacation, of course. I worked in the Post Office at Christmas delivering letters and sorting, and I

(26)

*Good achievement in games and athletics.*

(27)

(28)

*Objective outlook with signs of good participation.*

(29)

*Leadership role.*

(30)

(31) (32)

*Responsible roles.*

*Wide participation.*

(33)

(34)

*Leadership roles again.*

(35)



spent one summer at a forestry camp—that was hard work. I had a job on a farm once. Towards the end of my time I managed to get a temporary job in industry on several occasions, working in the lab. mostly on routine testing. In fact that was how I got in touch with my present firm.

*Experience outside the academic field and successful efforts to finance himself.*

I. That sounds pretty good. Did you enjoy your time at the University?

C. Oh yes, it's a grand time in one's life. I enjoyed every minute of it.

*Good adjustment.*

I. Which side of it gives you most pleasure looking back?

C. Do you know, I don't think I can answer that. The work was very interesting, but I don't think I'd have liked it so well if I hadn't been doing all the other things also.

*All-round participation.*

I. Now, tell me what happened when you came down from the University.

C. Well, as I told you, I'd had one or two vacation jobs in my present firm. They make plastics, and my M.Sc. thesis was on one aspect of that sort of stuff—colloids, actually. I'd talked to the chief chemist about it once or twice, and in fact some of my stuff had a bearing on certain aspects of plastics production. He gave me some facilities in the research, and I think I gave him some ideas—not any important ones, but on minor matters he'd never

*Signs of participation.*

had time to follow up himself. Anyhow, he asked me if I wanted a job with them when I'd finished, and I thought that working in an industrial laboratory was more what I wanted than carrying on research at the University. So I went on their staff as a chemist and worked in the lab. there for eighteen months or so.

I. That was in the Bristol works? What were you actually doing?

C. All sorts of things, really. There was a certain amount of materials testing and testing the quality of finished products.

I. Were you actually on the testing?

C. Oh no. That's the job of the laboratory assistants. But they're not qualified, and though they do the routine tests they don't really know what's going on. And when something turns pink instead of green all they can do is to tell someone who does know, and he's got to do something about it. That meant that one was mixed up in process control and in making alterations when things didn't go right. Then there was some development work on new products.

I. Was it a big department?

C. No. There were three of us qualified people under the chief chemist, and half a dozen assistants.

I. Were you directly in charge of any of the assistants.

*Signs of acceptability in the new social group.*

(36)

*Probably made a good impression in temporary jobs.*

(37)

*Signs of responsible roles.*

C. Not really. It was a bit too small to be organised like that. It was more informal and friendly-like. They would come to any of us who happened to be handy if anything looked a bit odd, though they were really responsible to the chief chemist. The same with process control. Looking back, there wasn't any real allocation of responsibility, but it seemed to work all right. We were a happy little team, and the chief gave us a good deal of rope. From a qualified man's point of view the processes were fairly simple and any of us could deal with anything that went wrong.

I. After you had been there a year-and-a-half, what happened to you?

C. I was beginning to chafe a little. I'd learnt my way around the industry, and I could cope with anything that came up in the laboratory. I didn't think there was much in it except on the development side, and being a small factory our development work was very limited. Besides, I thought I'd like to have a go at management, partly because I wanted more responsibility and partly because I wanted actual experience of production work. There was a job going in the Nottingham factory which is a much bigger production unit, so I applied, and got it about two years ago.

(38)

*Seems to have fitted in easily.*

*Sounds as though this job were a success.*

(39)

*Sets himself a high standard of achievement.*

*Realistic outlook on prospects.*



I. What does it involve?

C. I started off in charge of a department of about fifty men on plastics production. That was largely a matter of seeing that we got the materials on hand in time, and that we got the stuff out on time, with the supervision of the processes and machines thrown in. It was rather a worrisome job at first, until I learnt my way around and got some system into things, but after a few weeks it began to run quite smoothly.

*Leadership role.*

*Sounds as though this has been successful.*

I. What sort of operators had you?

C. They were all men. I had three supervisors under me, each in charge of about fifteen or so. They were good steady chaps, and provided you could make them understand what you wanted they'd get it done all right. The men were a good crowd, as indeed they usually are. The British working man's a pretty sound fellow, you know, and if he sees you know your job and don't try to come the heavy over him, he does all right. We had one or two who weren't quite up to it—labour was pretty scarce, and still is as a matter of fact—but after a few weeks we managed to lose them without any trouble.

(40)

*Sounds a good realistic adjustment to a management job, and an ability to deal with both systems and people.*

I. Are you still in the same job?

C. Yes, only I've had another two departments added. I've got about a hundred and fifty under me now with

three foremen in charge of them. It's still the same sort of thing though, production work, planning, and trying to make sure that things run smoothly. But now that the firm is having to catch changing markets there are more alterations in design than there used to be, and we have to be slicker in our planning to make sure we don't waste time changing over from one job to another.

I. How do you like the job?

C. Fine. It's just what I wanted. We've got to think ahead and have everything ready when it's wanted; and we've got to ensure that everyone knows what he's got to do and when he's got to do it. It's rather a thrill, you know, to see the whole thing running like a machine, with everyone doing his bit, and there's a sense of achievement when something unexpected turns up and you're able to deal with it quickly and prevent a stoppage. But I'm beginning to feel that it's time I moved on. I've been there two years and I've done a good job—the figures show that—and I've got the experience I wanted. But I'm on top of the job now and I'm beginning to think of the next step.

I. What is the next step?

C. Well, now, I'm not sure. I want eventually to get to senior management. General manager, for instance,

(41)

*Added responsibility.*

*Evidence of success and some advancement.*

(42)

(43)

*Signs of genuine satisfaction in this job.*

*Still setting a high standard of achievement.*

and, between ourselves, I've thought (44)  
about a place on the Board in my more  
optimistic moments. Now, supposing  
I'm good enough, I've got to gain a  
lot more experience of different sides  
of business. I know enough chemistry  
and enough about the laboratory work  
here to be able to keep up to date tech-  
nically. I know something about pro-  
duction now that I've managed a small  
department fairly successfully. But  
I don't know much about sales nor  
anything about the commercial side  
of the business, buying or accounting  
and so on. And I've got to find out a  
lot about that if I'm to get any further.

*Realistic assess-  
ment of the future  
with some con-  
fidence in himself.*  
(45)

So, taking it all round, I think my  
next step should be development  
work. I should have enough knowledge  
and experience to know what's prac-  
ticable from the production point of  
view and to understand the potential-  
ities of materials. I think I could do  
the job of assistant to the Development  
Manager, and I want the job because  
of the experience and opportunities  
it will offer.

I. I see. Tell me, which of your  
jobs have you liked best?

C. So far it's always been the one  
I'm on at the moment. I liked the  
lab., and when I moved on to produc-  
tion I liked that too. As the job has  
grown I've liked it even better.

*Progressive satis-  
faction as he  
reached the stand-  
ards he set for  
himself.*



I. How do you get on with your colleagues in the firm?

C. Very well, I think. The works manager is a first-class chap, and he gave me plenty of help and encouragement when I was new and green. The others are very good too. Mind you, they're working under some pressure, and you've got to be reasonable and perhaps a little diplomatic at times. But it's a good team and I get on very well with them.

I. Good. How are you living just now?

C. Well, I'm not married.

I. Engaged?

C. No, I've no idea in that line at the moment. I've got rooms in Nottingham in a smallish sort of boarding house. Quite comfortable, but there's nothing to keep me there.

I. How do you spend your spare time? Are you playing any games?

C. Yes. Football in the winter and cricket in the summer. I play for the works team.

I. What sort of standard is that?

C. Oh, nothing very great. There are local leagues, you know. I play mainly for exercise, and, well, I rather like playing with the chaps. One can give a hand in the running of the club, now and then.

I. Have you any office in the club?

(46)

*Good social adjustment.*

(47)

*Present circumstances show complete mobility.*

*Social-active interests.*

(48)

(49)

C. Yes. I'm Secretary of both the football and the cricket teams. (50)  
They elected me, because nobody else wanted the job, I suspect, but the correspondence and so on is probably more up my street than theirs. It's rather fun. We had a cricket social last week—supper, songs and recitations. Some of these old boys are terrific when they get going.

*Good participation and more leadership roles.*

I. Do anything with your hands? hobbies, I mean?

C. No, not much. I've kept a little experimental work going in chemistry (51)  
—one or two lines I'm interested in. I'd rather get out into the country if I've any time to spare at the week-ends.

*Practical-intellectual interests. Active interests.*

I. Do you spend much time in the country?

C. No, not much really. It's a pleasant part of England round there, and I sometimes take a bus out on a Sunday, walk a few miles and take a bus back.

I. How about your reading?

C. Well, let me think; I'm just finishing Trevelyan's Social History of England, and I'm reading a thing concerned with industrial management. It's called "Men, Managers and Morale", I think, by two people, a man called Raphael and a woman called Brown, or perhaps it's the other way round.

*Evidence of intellectual interests. Good quality reading.*

I. Is that typical of your reading, would you say?

C. Perhaps not exactly. You seem to have hit on rather a serious-minded week. I was reading Evelyn Waugh's "The Loved One" last week. That should correct the balance a little.

I. Good fun, wasn't it?

C. Terrific, but it creaked just a little here and there, don't you think? The end showed signs of having been tidied up rather hurriedly.

I. Yes, perhaps you're right. Do you do any technical reading?

C. Well, I try to keep up on the trade and scientific journals, but there's rather a mass of them, you know. I take the Economist as well, because I like to know what's going on in the world.

I. Do you go out much? Cinema? Theatre?

C. Yes, I go to the flicks occasionally, when there's anything I want to see.

I. What have you seen recently?

C. Well, let's think. Hamlet. That was first class, I thought. And the Dickens films, Oliver Twist and so on. They were good. "Mine Own Executioner", "Fallen Idol". I liked them. Can't remember any more. I don't go very often, only when there's something that's been well reviewed.

*Reasonably informed criticism.*

(52)

(53)

(54)

*More evidence of good quality intellectual interests.*

(55)

*Good quality films. More evidence of good intellectual interests.*



I. Theatre?

C. Not very much. We don't get the London shows here very often. It's mostly variety and revues, and I'm not much interested in them.

I. What about your radio listening?

C. Well, I listen to a little music, but I don't know much about it and usually I'd sooner read. Sometimes there's a talk in the Third Programme, and there's often something good about current affairs—American Commentary, for example. I like to hear the big shots talking, Cripps, Lord Samuel, Churchill and other public men. And then I occasionally hear amusing shows, "Twenty Questions", "Much Binding" and so on.

I. Good. Now about your social life. Do you get about much? Take part in any clubs?

C. Only the works sports club, as I've told you. I have a number of friends that I see occasionally among my colleagues, or people I've met at Church. Oh, yes, and there's the Amateur Dramatic Society at the Parish Church. I had a part in the Christmas pantomime.

I. What part?

C. I was the Wicked Uncle. Small stuff, you know, to raise funds

(56)

(57)

*More evidence of intellectual interests of high standard.*

(58)

*Evidence of good participation.*

(59)

(60)

for a new hall or something. But it was tremendous fun.

I. Had you done anything like that before?

C. At the University on the Rag Days we dressed up and put on little shows. It was just about that level.

I. Good. Anything else in your spare time?

C. No, I don't think so. That's about all.

I. Now, do I know all about you? We've covered your education, your working life and your spare time. Anything we've missed?

C. No, you haven't missed much. I can't think of anything else.

I. Right. Now I expect you'd like to ask me a few things. But let me tell you something about the job—

*Another social role and participation in another aspect of local life.*

So much for the assessment side of the interview. We now have a fairly complete factual biography of Mr. John Smith, and can begin sorting out the information at our disposal under our seven points. Figures in brackets refer to the facts elicited in the interview and noted in the margin.

### **First Impression and Physical Make-up**

He played football and cricket for the First Team at school (2, 8) and was Victor Ludorum in the School games (11). He got a double blue for football and athletics at the University (27). He still plays football and cricket for the works team (48). There is no evidence of his

progress at school or work having been interrupted by absence or illness (application form), and he looks fit and strong (observation). Failing a medical opinion, therefore, the layman can probably say that his health and strength are rather above ordinary standards.

We have seen during our contact with him in the interview that he is tall and well-proportioned, and has good features. He is suitably dressed for a business appointment and carefully turned out. He talks fluently and has a pleasant voice. He seems poised and confident, with an agreeably friendly manner, and his social experience seems sufficient to enable him to deal with most situations that an executive in business would be likely to meet (observation).

During the interview his manner gave the impression that he had plenty of energy and vitality (observation) and this is further borne out by his games and work record.

*Conclusion :* Under this heading, therefore, he seems to be distinctly above the average in health and fitness, manner and appearance, and energy. He matches up well to the specification.

### **Qualifications and Expectations**

In general education he gained School Certificate at fifteen (5) and Higher School Certificate at seventeen (6), both with considerable distinction.

His specialist training comprises a B.Sc. with First Class Honours in chemistry (21) and an M.Sc., again with distinction (22).

His work experience is made up of eighteen months as a chemist in the plastics industry (37) and two years in charge of production departments with up to 150 men under his control (42). In both these spheres he seems



to have done well and to have been entrusted with additional responsibilities.

His father was a Post Office official and his home background was secure and comfortable (1). He has made his own way and appears to be progressing to a higher level than that from which he started. He has no home or domestic ties (47) and seems able to move about as the position requires. His levels of expectation seem to be high, aspiring to a very high level job in industry (44).

*Conclusion:* His Qualifications sound rather impressive and are well up to the specification, and he meets the specification also for Expectations though there is some indication that after a comparatively short period he will be seeking further promotion.

### **Brains and Abilities**

His test scores are better than 99 out of 100 of the population, and his attainments, both academic and otherwise, suggest that this is no underestimate of his general ability.

From his record also it appears that this level of intelligence is effective in the ordinary affairs of life.

*Conclusion :* Mr. Smith seems to be a young man of considerable ability. He should be well above the minimum laid down.

### **Motivation**

We have the following evidence of an *intellectual* pattern of interests :

Participation in the School Science Society (16). Success and satisfaction in School work (7). Participation in the Chemistry Society at the University (33).

Success and satisfaction in academic work at the University with particular interest in research work (23).

Apparent satisfaction in laboratory work in industry and confidence in handling technical problems (39).

His grasp of the problems involved in running a department suggests he has thought them out and gets satisfaction in having the organisation and methods thoroughly under control (43).

Spare time technical reading (53) and some continued interest in research (51).

Good quality general reading and critical appreciation of what he reads (52).

Informed interest in current affairs (56).

Critical and informed interest in cinema and theatre (55).

Good quality and selective radio listening (57).

Intelligent and informed comment on what he reads and hears.

All this suggests that Mr. Smith applies his very considerable intellectual powers to the incidents about him and that he reflects on them to some purpose. The pattern of intellectual interests is consistent and realistic, the standards high and the achievements good in relation to his ability.

We have the following evidence of a *social* pattern of interests :

Played a team game (football) at his elementary school (4).

Played team games at his grammar school (9).

Holding school offices (14) and participating in such school activities as the Science Society (15), Dramatic Society (18) and choir (19).

Remarks suggesting a good adjustment to boys and masters at school (20).

Blue for a team game at the University (26). Participation in undergraduate life. Athletic Club (30), Rag Day Committee (32) and Chemistry Society (34).

Remarks suggesting a good adjustment to other students and staff (24).

Similar remarks about laboratory job (38) and present job (40) (46).

Further participation in team games (49) and social (58) and Church life (59) in Nottingham.

Such an array of evidence suggests that Mr. Smith finds satisfaction in doing things with other people, and that he has pursued this interest at work and in his leisure time over a considerable period. His interest seems to be realistically related to his environment and opportunities, he sets himself a high standard and his achievements are well up to his aspirations.

There is some evidence of active interests in his sports and games, but these seem to have little vocational significance since they are usually incidental and perhaps ancillary to his social interests. Likewise his interest in practical constructive matters seems to give him some satisfaction in production work but hardly enough to be a main thread in his life.

*Conclusion :* Mr. Smith will probably find his main satisfactions, therefore, in social and intellectual activities. His motivation seems to be particularly high and realistic, and he should set himself high standards in a job which provides scope for these interests. He will probably work towards the attainment of these standards consistently and with determination. His own plans for the future (45) accord with this realistic and impressive



pattern. Under this heading also, then, he matches up with the specification.

## Adjustment

There is the following evidence that he has fallen into responsible, participant or leadership roles during the different phases of his life history :

He was captain of the football team at his elementary school (3).

At his grammar school he was Captain of Cricket (10), Head Boy (12), Captain of his House (13), and President of the Science Society (17).

At the university he got a double blue (28), was President of the Athletics Section (29), on the Rag Day Committee (31), and President of the Chemistry Society (35).

He seems to have made a good adjustment to his colleagues and supervisors at school, at the University and at work (25, and see evidence quoted for the social interest-pattern).

He made a good enough impression during his temporary work in the plastics laboratory to be given a permanent job there (36) which he seems to have done well.

He has done well enough in an executive job to be given additional responsibility (41).

He is secretary of the works football and cricket teams (50) and has taken part in a church pantomime (60), though he has only been in Nottingham for a comparatively short time.

*Conclusion :* Wherever he has found himself, therefore, Mr. Smith seems to have been liked by his colleagues and trusted by his superiors. He has gravitated naturally into

responsible and participant roles and has discharged them with consistent success. It seems very likely that he is stable, well-organised emotionally, and that he will be capable of establishing good relations with those among whom he has to work and taking the lead where required. Under this heading he is well up to what the specification calls for.

It will already be quite obvious that our assessment fits closely to the specification, so there is no need to make a detailed comparison. The reader will also have observed how the same items of evidence fit into different aspects of the assessment, and how the whole thing hangs together to give a complete and coherent picture of the candidate. Once we have fitted all the facts we have about the candidate into a logical and coherent pattern, we can have a considerable degree of confidence that our assessment is accurate.

## SUMMARY

1. Working from a Five-fold job specification, an application form, and a test result, a verbatim account has been given of an imaginary interview.

2. This shows how the candidate is encouraged to provide a factual autobiography which is accompanied incidentally by considerable disclosures of his attitudes and aspirations.

3. The information thus elicited is then arranged as a Five-fold grading and gives a complete and coherent assessment of the candidate which can then be compared with the job specification.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE SHORT INTERVIEW

By now the assessment process should appear as a logical progression from the assembly of factual information, through its arrangement and interpretation, to a conclusion reached by reasonable inference. It is possible that the process may even seem a little pedestrian to many readers, but this is no drawback, because a satisfactory assessment can only be reached after a great deal of patient fact-collecting has been carried out. Because of a general reluctance to go through this rather tedious process, the most common fault in interviewing is to try to reach a conclusion before a basis of fact has been assembled which is adequate to bear the weight of inference placed upon it.

The preceding chapter has shown the interview and assessment process at length. Such an interview should take from twenty minutes to three-quarters of an hour, depending on the tempo which can be achieved and the amount of ground to be covered. Most people would agree that this is a reasonable time to allot to a candidate of that level.

But there will be many occasions on which it is not possible to spare so much time, and many positions to be filled which do not appear to warrant such protracted consideration. In addition to careful assessment by means of a lengthy interview, therefore, we must think about reaching a sound conclusion after a short interview.

Now the essence of the short interview is to gain as

accurate an impression as possible by a few significant clues. When there is enough time we can cover all the ground thoroughly and build up a complete picture. When time is short we must try to pick out the essential information which will reveal the main lines.

### **“ One Man in His Time Plays Many Parts ”**

One way to do this is to think of an individual's life-history as a series of environments in which he has lived. Some of these will have had a significant effect on him, while others will have their main importance in providing him with an opportunity to show what he can do. “ One man in his time plays many parts.” Probably each phase of the case-history will be of some interest from both points of view.

If we can thus divide up a candidate's biography into a series of main phases our task can be simplified. The problem then becomes one of eliciting a few significant clues about each phase which will show what opportunities it provided, how far our candidate made use of these, and what level he reached according to the criteria appropriate to the situation.

Shakespeare has given us a lead in this matter in “ As You Like It.”

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely  
players;  
They have their exits and their  
entrances :  
And one man in his time plays many  
parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first *Childhood*.  
the infant,

Mewling and puking in the nurse's  
arms,

Then the whining schoolboy, with  
his satchel

And shining morning face, creeping *School life.*  
like a snail

Unwillingly to school. And then  
the lover,

Sighing like a furnace, with a woeful *Late adolescence.*  
ballad

Made to his mistress' eyebrow.

Then a soldier,

Full of strange oaths, and bearded *Service life.*  
like the pard,

Jealous in honour, sudden and  
quick in quarrel,

Seeking the bubble reputation

Even in the cannon's mouth. And *Public life.*  
then the justice,

In fair round belly with good capon  
lined,

With eyes severe and beard of for-  
mal cut,

Full of wise saws and modern  
instances;

And so he plays his part. The sixth  
age shifts

Into the lean and slippered pantaloen, *Later middle age.*  
With spectacles on nose and pouch

on side,

His youthful hose, well saved, a  
world too wide

For his shrunk shank; and his big  
manly voice,



Turning again toward childish treble,  
pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last  
scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful  
history,  
In second childishness and mere *Senility*.  
oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste,  
sans everything.

These seven stages are all fairly recognisable today, but they are not quite the most important vocationally. We may take another seven which are more suitable for our purpose, though possibly less attractive from the artist's point of view.

- (1) Home and family background in childhood.
- (2) School life.
- (3) Further education or specialist training (if any).
- (4) Work history.
- (5) Service life (if any).
- (6) Spare time life.
- (7) Present circumstances.

If we consider most case-histories under these seven stages we shall find that we have not missed much that is vocationally significant.

### **The Essential Clues**

Within each of these stages our problem is to pick out the information we want by a few significant clues. This now becomes possible.

Starting with the first stage, that of home and family in childhood, we want to know two things: first the economic

standards of the background and second the level of emotional security. From these we shall be able to infer the opportunities open to our candidate, something of his standards of expectation and behaviour, and whether he had the advantage of growing up in a secure and happy home atmosphere. What are the minimum clues which will give us this information?

First and in many ways most revealing is the father's occupation. This in the vast majority of cases determines the economic level of the household, and at the same time it indicates something of the educational and cultural level to be expected. Next comes the number in the family and where the family lived when the candidate was young. With these three clues we can do quite a lot. Suppose, for example, we are presented with a candidate whose father was a riveter living in Clydebanks and who was the second of a family of six. We should be prepared to find that his childhood was handicapped by poverty, if not actual hardship, and that his opportunities for education and advancement were limited. The home circumstances would be what we should expect in a family of that size living on a skilled worker's wage which was probably intermittent during the depressed period between the wars, particularly when the riveted construction of ships was being challenged by the newer welding processes. If the family held together, however, it might nevertheless provide a stable and secure emotional background for the children to grow up in. We should get clues to this by finding out if the parents are still alive, if any of the family are still living at home, if our candidate ever visits his home, and what he remembers of his childhood.

These facts, then, will probably tell us what we want to know about most home and family backgrounds:

- (1) Father's occupation.
- (2) Home locality.
- (3) Number in family and candidate's place in it.
- (4) Did the home circumstances remain unchanged until adolescence?

While these facts are being elicited we shall often be able to gauge from the candidate's expression and the way he talks whether his childhood memories are in the main pleasant or unpleasant. This is important information so long as it is added to the facts noted above. Without the facts it is less valuable. A candidate has been known to protest that he had a happy childhood when further enquiry showed that his parents were divorced when he was five, and that the emotional strain of this broken home and many changes of residence led to grave difficulties of adjustment in adolescence and adult life.

### School Life

We are interested in the home circumstances in childhood mainly for their effect on the individual. Our concern with school life, while important in that way also, is principally to find out what effect he has had on his environment, and what use he has made of his chances. School gives most people their first opportunity to show what they can do in competition with their fellows at different kinds of tasks.

The criteria of success and failure at school are simple. Place in class and the passing of examinations will show the academic level reached. Playing for the school team shows success in games, and most activities of this nature can be assessed by such standards, or by quantitative evaluations such as times or distances in athletics. Offices in the school are an index of successful participation, and these may range from Head Boy or Captain of Games to President of the Philatelic Society or Secretary of the



Field Club. Thus if we find that an individual has been at a Secondary Grammar School and has sat consistently at the bottom of the class, has failed School Certificate at seventeen, has played no games, held no offices, and been a member of no school societies, we should be justified in concluding that his record showed no achievements according to any of the accepted criteria. Other things being equal, we should infer from this that he had not shown the qualities of industry, intelligence, acceptability and responsibility which success by these criteria demands.

We must not overlook the fact, however, that schools differ in atmosphere, in the opportunities they offer, and in the range of activities they provide. Probably the best are those in which an atmosphere of encouragement prevails while at the same time high standards of achievement and behaviour are set, and a wide range of activities made available for young people to try out, and reach some distinction therein. When the confident and mature personalities which emerge from such establishments are compared with the undeveloped youngsters who have merely attended for six hours a day at an establishment which aims no higher than teaching a set range of subjects, it becomes woefully apparent that there are wide differences in educational effectiveness in this country today.

The essential facts required under this heading, therefore, are probably these :

- (1) Type of school.
- (2) Examinations passed or place in class.
- (3) Place in team games, school offices or other evidence of participation in out-of-school activities.

### **Further Education or Specialist Training**

Here again we want to find out what use an individual has made of his opportunities, but the criteria of success

are diverse. At one end of the scale we may have a candidate who passes some years at a residential University, spends some time abroad, reads for the Bar, and perhaps in his late twenties may be considered fully equipped to start earning his living. At the other is the boy who left school at fourteen to supplement the family income by his wages, and who managed a couple of years at evening classes for which he received a certificate of purely local importance.

To cover this stage adequately in a short interview will demand considerable knowledge on the part of the interviewer. He must understand the intricacies of technical training courses, and the relative standing of National Certificates, City and Guild examinations and the qualifications represented by membership of technical and professional Institutes. He must have some knowledge of University degrees and know something about apprenticeship.

In most cases his own industry will have some specialist training arrangements, formal or informal, and as these will be relevant to the great majority of the jobs he is concerned with, it will be a comparatively simple matter to acquire the knowledge he wants by means of a few questions. By its very nature this aspect of the case-history tends to be specialised, so we may perhaps leave it without further comment. The essential clues will be :—

- (1) Institution at which further training was gained.
- (2) Standards reached.
- (3) Other evidence of participation or achievement.

### **Work History**

Our aim here is to find out what jobs the candidate has held in their chronological order, how long he has



been in them, his actual duties, how much he was being paid and the circumstances in which he left the jobs. In many interviews this may well be the most revealing aspect of the case-history.

It is important that under this heading we should cover the period from the end of a candidate's school life up to the present day thoroughly, and without leaving any time unaccounted for. There may be one or two jobs where the candidate has done rather badly, only staying a few months, and being dismissed for some reason which does not redound to his credit. He will probably not be anxious to talk about these, but if he is given the opportunity to gloss over or to omit reference to them an entirely false picture of his work-history may emerge. The interviewer, therefore, should keep a check unobtrusively upon dates to ensure that nothing like this is missed.

Getting at the facts of a work-history depends to some extent on having a reasonably wide acquaintance with present-day industry, so that when a candidate describes a job the interviewer will have enough background knowledge to understand quickly and with reasonable accuracy what the circumstances would be. Again, this will largely be peculiar to an industry, and it is perhaps unprofitable to try to generalise on the subject. Two points, however, may be made.

In the first place, this part of the interview often becomes a struggle between the interviewer's attempt to get at the actual day-to-day duties of the job, and the candidate's generalities about whether he liked the work or not. One frequently finds oneself asking questions like the following: "Now tell me what were your actual duties?" or "But take a typical day, then describe what you would be doing throughout it," or "Were you in charge of anyone else?" or "Were you responsible



for setting your own machine?" When the interviewer is dealing with a job he knows pretty well, he should be able to ask quite a number of key questions which will show with considerable accuracy what level of skill and responsibility the candidate had reached. Within their own industry, interviewers should try to compile lists of such key questions.

In the second place, the less responsible the job the more incomprehensible will be the candidate's account of technicalities. If we ask a leading surgeon how an intricate operation is performed, he will probably give us such a deceptively clear and simple account that we shall be satisfied that we at least understand the main essentials. But if we hear a description of the same operation from a theatre orderly we shall find it much more difficult to understand, and the general impression will be that this is much above the head of laymen like ourselves. It is always flattering to one's self-esteem if one can show someone else that one's job is difficult and intricate. But the interviewer will do well to remember that if a candidate cannot give a simple and comprehensible description of most industrial jobs, the limitation is more likely to be in the candidate's understanding of the process than in the interviewer's powers of comprehension.

We want under this heading, therefore :

- (1) A complete list of the jobs the candidate has held.
- (2) How long he was in them.
- (3) Details of his actual duties and responsibilities.
- (4) The circumstances under which he left.

### **Service Life**

As at present constituted, the Armed Forces probably make better use of their man-power than any other

organisation of comparable size. With very few exceptions, everyone enters at the same level and starts at the bottom of the ladder. The methods of selection ensure that each individual is carefully assessed and started off in the direction along which he is most likely to make progress, while at the same time they draw attention to those who appear to have potentialities for promotion. Nothing is perfect in this imperfect world, and no doubt there are still a few tales of young men of high attainments languishing unnoticed in humble jobs that can be to some extent substantiated. Nevertheless, there are few large organisations which take so much trouble about the matter, or which can produce so much statistical evidence of having got the right man into the right job.

A young man who goes into the Services, therefore, has an extremely good opportunity to show what he is made of, and his progress is an indication of his personal qualities. Conversely, lack of progress in the Services may not in every case tie up with indifferent personal qualities, but in the majority one is probably justified in assuming that the young man has either not made use of his opportunities, or has failed to come to terms with his environment.

Progress in the Services can usually be assessed by such overt symbols as rank, for in most cases increased responsibility is recognised by marks on the sleeve, cuff or shoulder-strap. There may be a few cases where this is not the case, such as in certain technical appointments where quite a humble rank carries unusually high responsibility, or in departments where promotion is notoriously slow. More intimate knowledge of a particular Service will enable the interviewer to be aware of this, or of cases where rank and appointment are less impressive than a candidate tries to make them sound.

When confronted with someone, therefore, who has



spent the whole of his period in the Army as a private, who has done consistently badly on training courses, specialist or otherwise, and who has not been picked out for any special appointment or employment, the interviewer may conclude, in the absence of any other evidence to the contrary, that his candidate has shown very modest ability, motivation and other personal qualities during this phase of his life. These remarks apply, of course, more to the war period than to peace-time National Service.

Our minimum clues therefore will be :

- (1) Rank on entering and time spent in the Services.
- (2) Typical appointments.
- (3) Rank on discharge.

### **Spare Time Life**

A good deal has already been said about spare time life in Chapter V. In the short interview, however, it is a question of finding out as rapidly as possible whether there is anything in the candidate's leisure pursuits which shows capacity or motivation unsuspected in his working life. If the question "How do you spend your spare time?" therefore, only elicits references to such non-participant activities as watching football, routine visits to the local cinema and odd jobs about the house, the subject can probably be dropped after a very little follow-up has drawn blank.

If, however, the candidate mentions some activity which sounds significant, the interviewer's problem is to discover his levels of achievement, the standard he sets himself and the reality-content by the minimum of questions. This involves having some knowledge—it need be no more than superficial—about the commoner pursuits.



Once again there are a few key questions which reveal a great deal. In house decoration, for example, anyone can distemper a room, but not everyone will undertake to paint a front door. If a candidate, when encouraged to talk on this subject, can describe how he has prepared the surface of the door, and how many coats of paint he has given it, then the probability is that he has pursued this practical interest with some purpose and effect. In the same way with other interests, a knowledgeable interviewer can find out about standards and levels by a very small number of deft questions.

The minimum we should aim at, therefore, in the short interview is :

- (1) To give the candidate an opportunity to talk about his spare time life, and note the direction of his interests.
- (2) To gauge the standards he reaches in the pursuits mentioned.
- (3) To relate these to his abilities and circumstances.

### **Present Circumstances**

“How are you living now? Have you a house?” Such questions can be asked quite naturally and easily in these days, and there should be little difficulty in finding out whether family or domestic circumstances will make a candidate unwilling to travel or take up work at some distance from his home. If we feel it advisable to go more deeply into the question we can find out how many children he has, where they are at school, and what are his plans for their future education. Such considerations may make the candidate wish to remain near some special educational facilities in a particular locality.

But over and above such straightforward details we should be able to gain an impression, from quite a few facts, of the kind of life-pattern a candidate is hoping to build up. If he is paying instalments on a semi-detached villa in a housing estate, has a small family at a local school, and one or two offices in local social organisations, it will be quite obvious that his local roots and connections have already struck fairly deep. There will be a very strong pressure on him to get a job of approximately the same social and economic level as his last. If such a candidate is offered a different level of job in another locality one can imagine the worried family conferences that will ensue before a decision can be reached ; and only if the new appointment offers a distinct advance in status or remuneration will its advantages seem to counterbalance the possible disruption of home life and local attachments.

Our essential clues, therefore, are probably contained in the answers to the following questions :

- (1) Is the candidate married or single and, if married, what family has he ?
- (2) How is he living, i.e., own house, rented flat, lodgings, or with parents ?

### **Example of a Short Interview**

Let us take an example of a short interview. The job in question will be a semi-skilled one with a specification on the following lines.

	E Grade	D Grade	C Grade	B Grade	A Grade
FIRST IMPRESSION AND PHYSICAL MAKE-UP		No particular standards here, as no contact with the public is involved. Able to stand up to light work with no great physi- cal strain.			
QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTA- TIONS		No special training or experience necessary; Wages and con- ditions of normal semi-skilled standard.			
BRAINS AND ABILI- TIES		Able to undertake routine work under supervision.			
MOTIVATION		Conventional level, aiming at no very great achievements.			
ADJUSTMENT		Little responsibility and no leadership. Reasonably reli- able and co-operative; able to fit in with fellow-workers.			



The interview might go something like this. It should take about ten minutes.

*Interviewer :* Good morning.  
You're looking for a job ?

*Candidate :* That's right.

*I.* Do you live round here ?

*C.* Yes. Jameson Street.

*I.* Are you a local man ? Have you always lived here ?

*C.* Yes. Born over in the East Side of the town ; Well Street.

*I.* When was that ?

*C.* Thirty-eight years ago.

*I.* Seen some changes since then, haven't you ?

*C.* Yes. All those houses beyond Well Street weren't built then.

*I.* Father a local man too, I expect. What did he do ?

*C.* Bricklayer.

*I.* Many in your family ?

*C.* Eight.

*I.* Where did you come ?

*C.* I was the fourth.

*I.* Must have been a bit of a struggle bringing up eight on a bricklayer's wages ? Was your father in steady work ?

*C.* Fairly. There were some bad times when things weren't so good. But as the older children began earning it was a bit better. We managed.

*I.* Parents still alive ?

*C.* My father is. My mother died

Home and family background :  
*Artisan or semi-skilled level. Some economic insecurity but no evidence that the home life was anything*



three years ago. She was nearly seventy. My dad's over seventy now. *other than happy and reassuring.*

I. Where did you go to school?

C. Oh, the Council school in Robertson Street till I was fourteen.

I. How did you get on?

C. Nothing brilliant. I got into the top class but I was only about the middle in it. I wasn't bad at arithmetic, but I liked the woodwork best.

I. Were there any games organised like there are now?

C. No, not so much. There was a school football team, which I played for, and we had the sports in summer, but that was all.

I. Did you do any good?

C. No. I ran in one or two races, but I didn't win anything.

I. Anything else going on at school?

C. No, nothing much. We played football in the playground and got up an odd game of cricket among ourselves. Oh, and we used to swim in the river in the summer, but that was about all.

I. When you left school, what did you want to do?

C. Well, I wanted to be a carpenter but I couldn't get an apprenticeship, and, besides, my father was out of work at the time so I had to get the best job I could. I got taken on by the A.B.C. Company first as a shop-boy and then on the machines.

School life :

*General education till 14. Average attainment.*

*Other school activities show average participation and modest standards.*

*No further education or technical training.*

I. What kind of machines?

C. Automatics. Turret lathes, mostly. They made parts for the motor industry.

I. How long were you there?

C. Ten years. Till I was about twenty-five. I left in 1935.

I. Always on the machines? Did you set your own machine?

C. No. There were setters who looked after that, one to ten machines. We just had to feed the blanks in and call the setter if anything went wrong. We were on piece-work.

I. Good money?

C. It was, for those days. I used to pick up about six pounds a week in the best weeks.

I. Why did you leave?

C. Well, things were getting a bit slack and the money wasn't so good. I was married by that time, and when the new radio factory opened up I thought I'd try my luck there. I got a job on the assembly line when it was started up, but after about a year or so they began putting girls on the actual assemblies and the men sort of took charge of them like. I had a section of about ten girls for a bit, but I got fed up with that and they put me on inspection.

I. Did that mean you had to have some knowledge of wireless?

*First job : semi-skilled repetitive work. Stayed about ten years (age 14 to 25). Reason for leaving sounds normal.*



C. A little, but not very much. You had a set number of connections to test and one or two things to check. If they weren't right you sent the set back. We hadn't anything to do with trying to put them right.

I. Was that a good job ?

C. Not bad. Five pounds ten steady. It was clean work, but there was no advancement.

I. How long did you stay ?

C. Till the war. I was in the Territorials, and so I got called up straight away.

I. The local infantry battalion ?

C. That's right.

I. How did you spend the first few months ? Training, I suppose ?

C. Yes, up in the Midlands. We went to France in March 1940 and I got wounded in Belgium. After I came out of hospital I was category C for a time, and so I got posted to the R.A.O.C. as a storeman. I was on a Base Ordnance Depot in Hampshire for a long time, then I went out to North Africa and over to Italy. I was released at the end of 1945.

I. Get any promotion ?

C. I was a corporal for a bit in Italy—only acting, though.

I. What kind of stores were you in charge of ?

Second job :  
*Semi-skilled work again. Seems to have failed as a supervisor. Stayed 4 years. Left because of war service (1939).*

War Service.  
*Limited achievement. Promotion to corporal. Mainly stores work.*

C. Mostly clothing and equipment.

I. Right. Now tell me what you did when you got back to Civvy Street.

C. I went back to the radio factory. You see I had my reinstatement rights there and they gave me my old job back again. I stayed there until last February.

I. What happened then?

C. Well, you know what the radio industry's been like, cutting down staff. They're only keeping the skilled men on.

I. I see. So these are the jobs you've done. First of all on auto-matics, then assembling and inspecting radio sets. Now tell me about your spare time. Have you any hobbies?

C. Well, I do a bit of gardening, vegetables and fruit, you know. And there's always something to be done about the house—painting or distemper or fitting up something.

I. What sort of jobs can you take on?

C. Well, I tried to build a toolshed once, but my brother-in-law helped with that. He's a carpenter and he did most of the work, I'm afraid. Then I take the wife out to the pictures sometimes, when we can get someone to stay in with the children. But usually it's a matter of me staying in and her going with her sister.

I. Seen anything good lately?

C. There was a good one on last

Last job.

*Semi-skilled work again. Stayed 3 years (1945-48). Reason for leaving sounds normal in the industry.*

week. I forget what it was called. All about American gangsters. Exciting, it was. Then we take the children out on the week-ends—walks round about, you know.

*I.* Are you a member of any clubs?

*C.* No. I like to spend my time at home. They were at me to join the Territorials again, but I wouldn't. Six years is enough time away.

*I.* Anything else in your spare time? Do much reading or listening to the wireless?

*C.* I read the papers now and then and I listen quite a lot to the wireless. Variety and plays, I like.

*I.* Good. How old is your family?

*C.* The eldest one's ten and we've a son of seven. The baby's just two.

*I.* How are you living now? Got your own house?

*C.* Yes, or at least I hope it will be sometime. We've been paying on it since 1935.

*I.* Right. Now, is there anything else to tell me?

*C.* No, I don't think so.

*I.* Well, here is the sort of job we can give you. . . .

*Spare time. Very conventional activities. Modest standards and levels of achievement. Seems to reveal no unsuspected capacity not disclosed in working life.*

*Present circumstances. Will want to stay in locality and seems likely to be quite satisfied with similar level of job.*

## The Assessment

Such an interview has provided us with quite an adequate case-history. On its basis the following assessment becomes possible.



	E Grade	D Grade	C Grade	B Grade	A Grade
FIRST IMPRESSION AND PHYSICAL MAKE-UP		Reasonably well-spoken and tidy-looking. No signs of disability or ill-health.			
QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTA- TIONS		General education to fourteen; no special training. Experi- ence confined to semi-skilled factory work. Would be satisfied with this type of job.			
BRAINS AND ABILITIES		Seems quite able to cope with this type of work.			
MOTIVATION		Modest levels of achievement. No failures. Makes some limited effort on practical hobbies.			
ADJUSTMENT		Seems well up to the kind of role called for. No signs of leadership or above- average responsi- bility.			

Such an interview is perhaps not entirely convincing, because in real life we should probably not encourage a candidate of this type to begin with his home life. It would probably be better to begin with his last job and work backwards. This need not involve any change in the approach or any radical alteration in method. The chronological interview pattern has simply been quoted because it provides a simple illustration of how the factual case-history can be elicited and how it serves as a basis for the assessment.

In case this short interview seems to be hedged around with too many formalities in the shape of seven-phase case-histories and five-fold gradings let it be made clear that much of what has been written out at length here will in practice take place within the interviewer's head. As the interview proceeds, the seven phases of the case-history will be taking shape in his mind, and by the time it comes to an end the information should have arranged itself into a five-fold assessment. He may be quite prepared to make a decision, therefore, at the end of ten minutes, and the fact that the methods suggested have been used to arrange his thoughts rather than to multiply paper work will not detract from the rightness of that decision.

Such, then, is the short interview. Candidates will differ, some being capable of a faster tempo and some of a slower. Some may be so obviously unsuitable that they can be dismissed from further consideration after a relatively few moments. On the average, however, it should be possible to make an adequate assessment of most candidates for hourly-paid jobs in about ten minutes, particularly if intelligent use is made of forms and test results.

## Factory Floor Interviewing

There used to be some controversy about whether the decision to engage a new worker should be made by the Personnel Officer or the Foreman of the Department in which he is going to work. Like most controversies about the various functions of management, it revolved round a question of emphasis. The underlying considerations in favour of engagement by the Personnel Officer are the advantages to be gained from a uniform standard of competence in interviewing, and the maintenance of common standards of acceptance throughout the company. Those considerations in favour of engagement by the foreman are mainly the enhanced sense of responsibility which results from it, and the assurance that he will try to get the best out of those whom he has taken on. Foremen rather resent having this decision taken out of their hands, and a considerable degree of concealed antagonism towards Personnel Departments can be traced to this cause.

In most cases a compromise is reached, by which candidates are seen in the Personnel Department first and then sent into the Department to be seen by the Foreman. This may sound time-consuming and unnecessary, but in fact it works very well, for it gives the candidate an opportunity to see something of the job for which he is being considered. In these days of full employment many applicants are not prepared to take just any job, or if they do so, and find once they start that it does not come up to their expectations, they will not be prepared to stay. Such a process, which may make the best use of both Personnel Department and foreman, raises the question of the sort of interview that may be given on the floor of the shop, or the "very short interview" as it might be called.



It will be difficult for the average foreman to see the necessity of starting his interview by going back to the candidate's home and family background. And it will be difficult to get some foremen to grasp the ideas on which biographical interviewing and systematic assessment are based. But no foreman will quarrel with the suggestion that he should find out where the candidate worked last, and how long he was there. Most will be prepared also to ask about the job before that, and possibly the one before that again. If none of these jobs lasted more than a week or so, most foremen would be prepared to admit that the applicant didn't seem a very steady sort of chap, and they should think twice before taking him on. They can, in fact, see the relevance of the case-history, and the need to infer personal qualities from patterns of behaviour, provided the point is put to them in terms of their normal experience, and not in high-flown, intellectual language.

Training supervisors in interviewing may be an essential element in gaining their co-operation if the Personnel Department wishes to improve its standards of selection. Such training should be on essentially practical lines, and the use of the case-history should at first be kept to what is obviously relevant to the job. In the writer's experience it does not take long for the point to be grasped, so long as it is presented in the right way. In fact, a supervisor who started by protesting that it was quite impossible to find out anything at all about applicants, or even to pick and choose between them in these days, flew off the handle with one of his subordinates only a short time later for taking a man on without finding out anything about his background. It is true that the man in question had just come out of jail for fraud, had received several advances on his wages, borrowed various sums of money from

people in the department, including the supervisor, and then left the firm with the police closely in pursuit. But, as the supervisor said, "If he'd only asked him half-a-dozen questions, he'd surely have got some kind of a line on him."

## SUMMARY

1. The short interview depends upon reaching an understanding of the case history by means of a minimum number of significant clues.

2. This can be done by thinking of it in seven main phases. These, with the essential clues in each, are given below :

(a) *Home and family life in childhood :*

- Essential clues
- (1) Father's occupation.
  - (2) Home locality.
  - (3) Number in family and candidate's place in it.
  - (4) Did home circumstances remain unchanged until adolescence ?

(b) *School life :*

- Essential clues
- (1) Type of school.
  - (2) Examinations passed or place in class.
  - (3) Place in team games, school offices or other evidence of participation.

(c) *Further Education or specialist training :*

- Essential clues
- (1) Type of institution.
  - (2) Standards reached.
  - (3) Other evidence of participation.

(d) *Work history :*

- Essential clues
- (1) Complete account of jobs held.
  - (2) How long each was held.
  - (3) Actual duties and responsibilities.
  - (4) Circumstances of leaving.

(e) *Service life :*

- Essential clues
- (1) Rank on entering and time served.
  - (2) Typical appointments.
  - (3) Rank on discharge.



(f) *Spare time life :*

- Essential clues      (1) What candidate talks about when given  
the opportunity—direction of interests.  
(2) Evidence of standards reached.  
(3) Relation to abilities and circumstances.

(g) *Present Circumstances :*

- Essential clues      (1) Marital status and number of dependants.  
(2) Type of home—own house, lodgings, etc.

3. An account has been given of a short interview in which most of these clues have been elicited, and an assessment drawn up from such a case-history.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A CASE-STUDY IN RETROSPECT

THERE is always some hostility to any attempt at assessing human personality and predicting an individual's probable lines of development. Some of this may be based on a laudable diffidence about prying into other people's lives and trying to pin down the elusive and intangible values which constitute their essential individuality. Some may spring from no more than a distrust of new ideas and a greater willingness to denigrate than comprehend. But some criticisms arise from a doubt that distinguished men might have failed to gain recognition had they been submitted to this cold-blooded process of assessment in early life, and that they might then have been denied the opportunities which they have since created for themselves.

One of the leading figures of the present day, for example, is reputed to have said "If I had been put through all this nonsense when I was a young man I would still be earning about two shillings an hour". In other words, there is a feeling that outstanding potentiality can only show itself in the circumstances of real life, and that it cannot be detected beforehand by any other means. The corollary of this, of course, is that an outwardly impressive but radically unsound person who can make a good show when he is under observation for a short period, will gain high marks on any assessment process, but that his limitations will only become apparent when he is faced with the pressure of a real life situation.

It is, of course, impossible to disprove such a contention, for although the use of the methods we have outlined in previous chapters seem to enable the right person to be put in the right job in eight or nine cases out of ten, no one can say what course a particular individual's life might have taken had he been interviewed for employment on these lines many years ago.

### A Case-History

What we can do, however, is to go back in the life of a distinguished man today and find out what an interview with him would have shown many years ago. Naturally we cannot reconstruct the interview situation with any verisimilitude, but a well-documented life story will at least provide us with the essential facts which we would have uncovered.

Let us imagine, then, that we are back in the year 1901 and that we are interviewing a young man of twenty-six, not very tall, neatly turned out, with a firm jaw and rather a determined expression. The case-history would be something like this.

*Home and Family Background:* His father occupied a very distinguished position in public life, and his mother was well known for her graceful appearance, her intelligence and charm of manner. His family occupied an established position in the life of the country, his childhood appears to have been happy, and his relations with his parents agreeable and reassuring. There is some evidence that his early life was shadowed by his father's rather unfortunate retirement from office and subsequent indifferent health.

He was born, therefore, into a background of security, both in the economic and emotional sense, and with an established place in the social hierarchy, in days when the



structure of society was more stable than it has since become.

*Education :* His schooldays were undistinguished in the normal sense of passing examinations and holding school offices. In many of the ordinary subjects he appears to have been backward, possibly because of unsympathetic handling at critical periods in his development, and possibly because they were presented to him with a minimum of effort to catch his imagination. He became a minor official in his Public School but gained little distinction in the life of the place, and though he won the Public Schools Fencing Championship, he seems to have had no other success in games or school activities.

Nevertheless when this rather unpromising record is examined more closely some interesting facts come to light. Most of the school subjects and activities seem to have held little reality for him, and consequently he felt no inclination to excel in them merely because this was the accepted thing to do. This disregard of prevailing standards and opinions was linked with a poor adjustment to the restrictions and purposeless monotony of school life. At those subjects which did appeal to him, partly because of their inherent interest, partly because of their utility, he worked hard and achieved some distinction. Literary pursuits fell into this category, and he won an open prize for poetry reading at a comparatively early age, while later he provided essays on a clandestine contractual basis for one of his academic seniors with a measure of success which was at times embarrassing.

At the close of his schooldays he succeeded, though with some difficulty, in passing into the Royal Military College at Sandhurst.

*Further Education:* His period as a gentleman cadet was one of considerable development, both intellectually

and emotionally. The subjects of study stimulated his interest and called forth his best efforts. He accordingly passed out with honours, eighth in one hundred and fifty. He appears also to have entered more fully into the life of the College and to have got on well both with his superiors and with the other cadets.

*Working Life:* He was posted to a cavalry regiment, stationed first in this country and later in India. He seems to have carried out his duties adequately as a subaltern and to have been popular with his brother officers. His inclusion in the unit's polo team, which won the Inter-Regimental Tournament in 1899, is perhaps adequate evidence of his standing in the regiment.

In addition to normal regimental duties, however, he contrived to see a considerable amount of active service by getting himself attached to various Headquarters in places where fighting was going on. He visited Cuba as guest of the Spanish Captain-General in command of operations against rebel guerrillas. Next he got himself attached to the Malakand Field Force and took part in two Northwest Frontier campaigns. During these he acted as correspondent to two well-known newspapers. When the Sudan campaign was imminent he procured an attachment to another cavalry regiment in the face of marked lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Commander-in-Chief of the Force. As a result of this attachment he was present at the battle of Omdurman. During this campaign also he acted as a war correspondent.

Shortly after this he left the Army to enter politics and contested a bye-election at Oldham. He was unsuccessful, but as the South African war broke out shortly after, he left this country to participate in it as a war correspondent. The remuneration offered to him at this time suggests that he had created a very good impression by his



previous efforts in this line. Shortly after his arrival in South Africa, however, he was involved in a minor action with the Boers and was taken prisoner. After a month in captivity he escaped and returned to the British Army. He was given a temporary commission in a Light Horse unit, and saw action at Spion Kop and in the operations leading to the relief of Ladysmith. His despatches to the paper for which he was correspondent now commanded wide interest and had considerable influence. He continued in South Africa until the entry into Johannesburg in 1900, then returned to this country as something of a national figure.

When he stood again for Oldham in the General Election of 1900 he was elected to the House of Commons, but delayed taking his seat until he had completed a lecture tour in this country and the United States which brought him fees amounting in all to £10,000.

*Spare Time Life:* It is a little difficult to separate his spare time from his working life, for the two overlap and complement each other. Nevertheless, he seems to have spent a considerable amount of time on serious reading, mainly history, philosophy, economics and similar subjects. He published a book on the Malakand Campaign which had considerable success, and a novel which appeared in serial form in Macmillan's Magazine.

After the Sudan Campaign he wrote two volumes on the subject under the title of "The River War", which were subsequently published and were well received. Throughout the period from entering Sandhurst he seems to have led an active social life, meeting and continuing on friendly terms with many of the most distinguished people in public life, the Services and in Society.

*Present Circumstances:* He was still single, living either alone or with his mother. His father had died when he was twenty-one.



## The Assessment

So much for the case-history. When the facts are arranged in order our assessment would be something on the following lines.

*First Impression and Physical Make-up :* He was evidently fit and strong, for he could stand up both to Active Service conditions and to a very busy life with evident enjoyment. There was some weakness in one shoulder through an early dislocation, though this does not seem to have interfered with anything but the most strenuous occupations. He appears to have enjoyed abundant physical energy. His appearance and turnout seem to have been in keeping with the fashionable world of the time, and his speech, poise and manner appear to have been of such a standard that he could mix on easy terms with the most distinguished people. As a result of this his confidence and social experience seem to have been equal to any situation in which he found himself.

*Qualifications and Expectations :* His general education was what we should probably now regard as equivalent to Matriculation standard, while his professional education and experience as a soldier were considerably above the average for a young officer of his rank and age. He also had considerable experience of journalism, letters, public speaking and political work. Brought up from birth among well-to-do people of established position, and having already made his way by his own efforts into the ranks of public men, it is obvious that he will only be satisfied with a position which offers scope and remuneration of the very first order.

*Brains and Abilities :* As Dr. Binet had not yet developed his methods of intelligence testing no psychometric evidence would be available on this point, interesting

though it would undoubtedly have been. It is obvious, however, from the case-history, that his intellectual capacity must have been significantly above average.

*Motivation* : We have abundant evidence of an exceptionally high standard under this heading. He seems to have taken part in intellectual, social and active pursuits, to have set himself high standards and to have achieved them by overcoming all obstacles between him and his goal with ingenuity and determination. Compared with the general run of people at his age, the case-history shows quite exceptional motivation, reality-content and achievement.

*Adjustment* : There is evidence of ability to establish satisfactory relationships with a wide range of people and to exert a high degree of influence over them. He has also sustained difficult and trying roles with success over long periods, in spite of his comparative youth. It seems, therefore, that we are dealing with an exceptionally well-organised personality, with an extremely good sense of reality and a well-controlled though strong pattern of emotions.

## Conclusions

Had this imaginary interview been carried out in 1901 by the methods outlined in previous chapters, we should, I think, have concluded that we were dealing with someone quite out of the ordinary, and would have felt safe in predicting a distinguished career for him either in politics or in the Services. I do not suggest that we should have said "Here is the great war leader of 1940-45, who will stand in history beside his famous ancestor, the Duke of Marlborough" (it is unnecessary by this time to enlighten the perspicacious reader as to the identity of our "candidate"). But in the unlikely event of the young Mr.



Churchill having asked our advice about his future line of advance nearly fifty years ago, I feel that such an approach to the problem would have enabled us with confidence to encourage him to press on with a political career.

At the same time, however, when one reads his life-story attentively, as set out by himself up to that date,\* it is surprising how far the germ of later developments can be seen in those early days. On many occasions his determination to run his own line without regard to the opinions of others, stands out with compelling clarity. At times this bring to mind his isolation throughout the leaderless 1930's, and at others it foreshadows his stand as the very embodiment of his country's will to victory in the early 1940's.

Interesting reflections are prompted also by the effect of his father's life and tragic eclipse during his late adolescence. But perhaps the most significant point is his sense of the past and his appreciation of the significance of events as they happen. He must have been about twenty-two when he wrote his first book on the Malakand Field Force. On very few young men at that age would their first campaign have made such an impression that they would feel impelled to put the whole experience into coherent form and relate it to its setting in this fashion. This same ability to react to happenings, not as isolated phenomena, significant only in themselves, but as stages in the continuous unfolding of history, has made itself felt in the man who has made history, but who has at the same time recorded the present and interpreted the past.

It is not difficult to be wise after the event, and a case-history put together from an autobiography written thirty years later may bear little relation to one built up in real life. Nevertheless, had we interviewed Winston Churchill

\* "My Early Life". Winston S. Churchill.



painstakingly and biographically when he was twenty-six, we could hardly have failed to recognise him as a young man with exceptional personal qualities, and to have predicted that he would be successful in his chosen career. How successful we could have had no means of knowing, but we would certainly not have denied him his opportunities, or advised him instead to take up teaching or clerical work.

## CHAPTER XIV

### INTERVIEWING YOUNG PEOPLE

FOR some years now there has been an increasing interest in the ways in which young people enter industry or commerce. This is due partly to a growing awareness that many boys and girls got their first job quite haphazardly and without any consideration of its prospects and opportunities or of their own suitability for it, and partly to the realisation that a false start in an unsuitable job may have the most serious consequences. Most young people need confidence above all else, and confidence is bred most quickly by success. If the important and exciting change from school into the adult environment of work is marked by undue difficulties in picking up the task and adjusting to the conditions, and if the first job is terminated by failure and dismissal, a very severe shock will have been administered to the self-esteem at a most vulnerable age. To start a second job with this failure still fresh in mind means that the young person is working under an emotional handicap which will make the problem of adjustment to the second trial even more difficult. If another failure ensues then the chances of a successful start in life will become progressively more remote.

The interviewing of young people, therefore, whether as applicants for employment or as individuals in need of advice and guidance, is a matter of considerable importance if we are to make the best use of the country's manpower. But it is a matter also which is complicated by difficulties which do not arise in adult interviewing.

## **The Special Problem of Adolescent Interviewing**

Most of these difficulties arise from the very fact that the candidate is young and inexperienced. Most adults have some knowledge of what earning a living means, and they have picked up something about the conditions and opportunities offered by different jobs. They also have some idea of what the interviewer may want to know, and by seeing some analogy between what has happened to them before, what is happening at the interview, and what it may lead to in the future they can make shape to cope with the situation.

But a boy or girl may have little or no idea about what really goes on in industry or commerce, because no opportunities have so far come their way of finding out. Moreover, it happens not infrequently that such ideas as he or she may have are so unrealistic as to be totally misleading. For example, the content of a job may be determined by that aspect which has caught the imagination; a doctor may be thought of as someone who spends his time driving around in a motor car—which is true enough in one way, but when the real content of a physician's work is appreciated the relative importance of motoring falls to a very insignificant part of the total picture.

In these circumstances the discussion of a young person's vocational aspirations may be rather misleading, because in this aspect of the matter he needs knowledge and guidance before he can talk sensibly about what he wants to do. But if a discussion of the child's ambition for the future is thus beside the point, what about the details of his past?

Here again we are presented with a difficulty, for an adolescent's past life must in the nature of things be fairly



short. The theory which underlies much of what has been put forward in the preceding pages is that trends of development become relatively easy to discern when a sample of behaviour is studied which extends over a long enough period for these trends to make themselves apparent. But an adolescent has lived only a few years, some of which are the passive years of infancy, and the remainder have been passed in the stereotyped situations of home and school. The sample of behaviour which can be extracted at an interview is therefore bound to be short in duration.

Obviously in these circumstances we must try to make up for the short duration of our sample by extracting more significant detail. But here we come up against a third difficulty, that of establishing contact with an adolescent. Children lack confidence in themselves, and when confronted with a world of adult values they make use of a series of well-known defence-mechanisms. Some may retire within themselves and exhibit a paralysed shyness to the interviewer, which seems to increase in intensity as the latter tries to be reassuring and sympathetic. This retreat may be accompanied by a rich phantasy life, in which the dramatic achievements of a day-dream compensate for the shameful feeling of inadequacy in the day-to-day world. Some may make a brave show of self-assurance, but this tenuous over-confidence may make it even more difficult to establish contact, quite apart from the danger of the interviewer becoming irritated at what he may construe as insolence or lack of interest. Others may be anxious to do the right thing and may give what they imagine to be the "correct" reply, even though in doing so they may misrepresent some important aspect of the case.

## Lightness of Touch

It follows, therefore, that the interviewing of young people calls for a lightness of touch and a quickness of insight into the interview situation rather beyond what is required for adult interviewing. Even in the short life history of a child there is quite a lot of significant material on which to base an assessment. But much of this will not be revealed to an adult unless he is thoroughly convinced that it will not be treated with the mild and patronising ridicule which he has probably learned already is the characteristic attitude to the doings of children. Let us consider what information we are likely to get, and how far it may be significant.

In the first place, there will be the home life, which should show the level of opportunity, emotional security, and the kinds of activity which will be regarded as normal. Now in the culture pattern in which we live there are considerable differences in income level, and those in the lower income-groups can betray a high degree of anxiety in case the groups above should look down upon them. Home backgrounds are therefore a tender subject even among adults, while among young people they may be dangerous. After all, an adolescent is not to know that in your eyes a happy and emotionally secure family life in the financially restricted circumstances of an unskilled labourer is a greater advantage than a home in the wealthy classes which has been broken up by divorce or shaken by misunderstanding and suspicion between the parents. He is more likely to think that you are prying unjustifiably into his affairs and probably holding it against him that his father didn't wear a collar and tie and work in an office.

Next there is the school life which presents us with two

problems, one of comparative standards and the other of width of opportunity. To deal with the former we must have some criterion by which to evaluate the child's achievements, and the obvious one of place in class may in many cases be unreliable. For example, the child who is half-way up a class in which the standards are high will obviously have done better than one who is near the top of one where standards are low. Knowledge of the workings of schools in our own locality will help in this case, and is an essential for those who are interviewing young people regularly.

As regards width of opportunity there have been, and there probably always will be, considerable differences between the number of extra-curricular activities arranged by different schools. A young and enthusiastic staff under a headmaster who takes these matters seriously can produce a wide range of games clubs, literary and debating societies, school choirs, dramatic groups, scientific associations and the like, all of which provide opportunities for trial trips in different directions and the achievement of goals in these various fields. But in the past there have been schools in which little or nothing happened outside the class-room, and the few appointments open to the pupils were concerned with the giving out of exercise-books, filling of ink-wells and similar mundane matters involving very limited and conventional responsibility. In such cases to be a "class prefect" will mean something very different from those where some degree of real self-government prevails in the school.

Drawing an adolescent out to talk about his school life, therefore, will involve the interviewer in the problem of estimating the standard of his achievements against the opportunities which the school presented. If this can



be done on a basis of real knowledge, as when he is familiar with the working of the schools in the locality, there should be little difficulty. But this knowledge is not always easy to obtain. Many of the most significant activities may be those about which the young person is disinclined to talk.

### **The Young Person's Spare Time**

The third aspect of the case history open to us raises this difficulty in a specially acute form. A young person's spare time may well contain some of the most significant material for the employment interviewer, particularly in the case of those who leave school at the normal age. But adolescent leisure is not always devoted to nice suitable hobbies like playing healthful games or reading improving books, and young people have sometimes good reason to be wary of talking too freely about how they spend it. On one occasion when a sixteen-year-old was being interviewed, the school record and spare-time activities were proving remarkably blank and unrewarding. There seemed to be no games, no clubs or societies, no hobbies, no significant activity of any kind. It was only by accident that the interviewer stumbled across an informal concert party which put on shows with some regularity in the school hall, and for which this individual wrote the script, vamped the music on the piano, improvised the scenery and conducted the rehearsals. These activities he seemed to be rather ashamed of, though he would probably have thought that a Shakespeare play produced by one of the staff was something you could talk about. How much more important from the assessment point of view was the leadership of a hilarious evening's fun organised by the boys themselves than a "bit" part in "Hamlet" run by the English master.

To deal adequately with this aspect of the case history one must know how young people spend their leisure and what activities they go in for. This means that the interviewer must understand the general conception of collecting the numbers of railway engines, breeding hamsters, flying model aircraft, and a host of other activities, of some of whose existence he may not previously have been aware. There will, moreover, be changes of fashion, and he may suddenly find that his laboriously acquired conversational gambits about racing pigeons have gone completely out of date, and he must turn to music and find out how a boogie rhythm differs from bebop, and who is the contemporary idol among band leaders.

This may sound a lot to expect of a responsible adult who has his own preoccupations, but it is none the less essential to an understanding of the achievements of young people. We must know the background sufficiently well to be able to assess the standards that have been reached, and if the significant activities do not lie in the conventional fields of which we already have some knowledge, we must penetrate to the unconventional fields and brief ourselves about the activities of which we may at present be ignorant, but which adolescents take seriously and in which they try to excel.

### **The Establishing of Contact**

This question of knowing about the kind of things that matter to young people has another aspect, for it plays a part in the establishing of contact in the interview. We have already noted some of the difficulties in gaining the confidence of adolescents quickly, and it will be obvious that one of the main obstacles is their fear of not being



taken seriously. Imagine an interview where the adult says brightly:

"Now tell me about your spare time. What hobbies have you got?"

Candidate: "I follow speedway racing, Miss."

Interviewer: "Well, well, that is interesting." (*With a mature simper.*) "I'm afraid I've never been to that, but I'm sure it must be very exciting. Tell me, do the dogs ever catch the electric hare?"

Candidate (to himself): "Silly old fossil. She don't even know what speedway racing is. What's the use of talking to her. (*Aloud.*) That's greyhound racing, Miss. Speedway is different."

From then on the gulf between the two will be unbridgeable, and anything like adequate contact will be impossible. The interviewer should have known enough about local conditions to be able to say:

"Oh, you support the Lions (or Tigers or Aces, or whatever the local team is called). How did they do last week?"

Such a response will establish common ground between the two and will be some sort of indication that the young person is being taken seriously. He may then be prepared to open up on the subject, having had a guarantee that he is being treated as a reasonable human being and that the interviewer is interested in what he has to say and reasonably knowledgeable about it.

Most of the difficulties in making contact with young people arise from this lack of common ground, which tends to make both sides ill at ease. A *Punch* drawing of several years ago hit this off neatly when it depicted a clergyman meeting a small girl with a woolly rabbit in the street. The clergyman, obviously searching for some-



thing to talk about, said, "Good morning. How's your rabbit?" The small girl, in exactly the same quandary, replied, "Very well, thank you. How's your Church?" One cannot expect the young person to come very far to meet the interviewer, so it is up to the interviewer to go to meet the young person. And it is his job to be able to do so.

The common fault is to let the effort be obvious. Talking down, in the "Well, my little man" style makes it at once apparent that the interviewer is going off his own ground into a region which he does not take with the same seriousness. Still worse is the nauseating facetiousness with which some adults can embarrass young people beyond expression. In spite of his uncertainties, the adolescent is quick to sense that he is being treated with condescension and though he may not be able to put his feelings into words he will resent it and will fall back on one or other of the defence mechanisms mentioned earlier. Candidates of this age must not only be taken seriously, but must be manifestly seen to be taken seriously. We shall never be able to do this unless we can talk seriously about the things that matter to them.

### **Impatience**

But, of course, it is unlikely that a young person will be able to maintain a responsible and serious attitude to all subjects throughout the whole interview. There will be lapses of greater or less significance, and the interviewer may find that after a considerable time spent in gaining the candidate's confidence the interview tends to close on a somewhat immature note and the decision confused by rather childish issues. This will make demands on his patience, but unless one has a very large stock of that commodity one should not take up interviewing young

people. So many things can arise, such as the intrusion of parents who take up a position of interpreter between interviewer and candidate and who answer some of the questions themselves, making the remainder impossible to answer by saying, "Now, Maisie, tell the lady about what you done and don't slouch about like that in your chair." Parents have a right and a duty to know how their children are employed and they must never be thought of as interfering busybodies, but some means must be found of spending some time alone with the young candidate.

Another drain on the interviewer's patience may be the doubtful reality-content of the young person's interests. We have already considered this matter as it applies to adults (p. 73), and we have seen how the child is handicapped by his lack of understanding of the industrial situation. It is common knowledge that most small boys decide to be engine drivers, bus conductors, or circus performers when they grow up, for the idea that one can earn a living by doing these glamorous and exciting jobs makes such a decision the only sensible one to a six-year-old mind. During the next ten years, however, these thoroughly unrealistic vocational aspirations have to be replaced by something which bears a better relation to the actual opportunities presented and the young person's attributes and endowments. One hopes that this process takes place some time in the adolescent years, but it is not by any means certain just when it has been completed. And it may be very irritating to carry on a conversation some part of which is on a realistic plane while a significant remainder remains on a phantasy level.

There seems no reason to doubt that the general principles of interviewing outlined in previous chapters

apply also to the interviewing of young people, but it is obvious that the situation is more delicate and that it requires lighter and more careful handling. Even with the more restricted case-history it is often possible to get quite a clear picture of the personality. In all cases it should be possible to lay down the limits above and below which a good adjustment is unlikely to be achieved. To place an adolescent in exactly the right job may not be possible, for in any case some development will always take place and there must be room left for growth in several senses of the term. There should be no reason why he cannot be started on the right lines, or in the correct "job-family" as it is called, provided that the interview is conducted systematically in a propitious atmosphere.



## SUMMARY

1. The interviewing of young people presents special problems which arise out of

(a) Their lack of experience and knowledge of industrial work.

(b) The comparatively short life-history.

(c) Their lack of confidence, which makes it more difficult to make contact in the interview.

2. These problems make it necessary for the interviewer to have a very light touch because the shortness of the life history must be offset by going more deeply into it.

3. Knowledge of the standards characteristic of local schools and of adolescent leisure pursuits, even when these are unconventional, is a prerequisite of this approach to the case-history.

4. Such knowledge is also necessary for the establishment of contact with a young person, for it enables the interviewer to make it clear that he is being taken seriously.

5. It is unrealistic to expect an adolescent always to remain on a mature and responsible level, and the interviewer must remain patient when an element of unreality makes itself apparent.

## CHAPTER XV

### RECAPITULATION

THE aim of this book has been to show how people can be guided into jobs which they can do well and from which they will derive satisfaction. Let us consider how far that aim has been achieved.

The variety of ways in which one can make a living is infinite. At this moment there are miners working hundreds of feet below the ground, digging out coal and sending it to the surface. There are also airmen flying thousands of feet above the earth, transporting goods and passengers all over the world. Between the two are millions of men and women engaged on tasks, some of which are so bizarre as to be almost unbelievable, others so humdrum and monotonous that it seems tragic that a human being should be condemned to spend his life in such work.

But in a country such as our own there is another source of variety in jobs. Over 92% of firms in British industry employ fewer than 250 people, and of the total working population, well over half are employed by these small firms. The typical working unit in Britain, therefore, is a small one, and the few large combines with thousands of workers are to a great extent unrepresentative.

Now each of these small companies is a separate social unit, with its own ways of thought, its own atmosphere, and its own standards of acceptable behaviour. These things make up the environment in which a job is done, and what suits one person will not suit another. It is

quite possible for someone who is efficient and successful at a job in one company, to move to a similar job with another and be a very flat failure.

Any idea, therefore, of standard job specifications which will be applicable to a whole industry, irrespective of its location throughout the country, is not entirely realistic. Not only will there be variations in the technique of the job from one place to another, but also the environment in which the work is done will change from firm to firm. We must have a description of the *actual job in its setting* before we can be sure of the kind of person who will do it well.

### **Variations Between People**

Human personality also is infinitely varied. We have drawn attention to three main divisions, the learning or understanding aspect, the goal-directed or motivational aspect, and the aspect which concerns the organisation of emotions or adjustment. Under any one of these there is room for wide difference between individuals; men may be above or below average in intelligence and special abilities, they may be strongly or weakly motivated, and their emotions may be well or badly organised. Moreover, there may be variations between these three aspects in any one individual. He may be above average in ability, below average in motivation, and just about average in adjustment.

At the same time, people pass through all sorts of different experiences. These will have an effect on their development, each one of us reacting to them in his own characteristic way. The innate characteristics, therefore, such as physical make-up and abilities, and possibly adjustment tendencies may be modified by the incidents



life presents to us, causing us to develop in one direction or to be inhibited in another.

In this bewildering variety, any attempt to classify people into a few simple types is foredoomed to failure. Individuals can be ranked quite successfully in regard to any single trait. We may, for example, arrange them according to height, and if our group is homogeneous, and the numbers are large enough, they will fall into something approximating to the normal curve of distribution. The same will happen if we rank them according to weight, colour of hair or other physical characteristics.

We may also arrange people in terms of certain mental attributes. A good general ability test will rank them according to the normal curve for quickness on the uptake, and similar results will be found in tests of mechanical understanding, verbal fluency and the like. A thousand individuals tested for these qualities would probably provide us with quite a series of bell-shaped curves, whose regularities might be quite impressive.

### **The Unique Individual**

But when we turn our attention to a single individual, these regularities will cease to be so impressive. Suppose we were to start on a large parade ground with our thousand men arranged tidily for height—tallest on the left, shortest on the right. We shout an order for them to rearrange themselves according to weight. A re-shuffle takes place, not a large one perhaps, for the taller men will tend in many cases to be the heavier, but nevertheless there will be some changing of places. We shout another order and they arrange themselves according to the colour of their hair. More re-shuffling takes place,

this time rather more serious. Another word of command, and they arrange themselves in order of general intelligence. This time the re-shuffling may be more violent still. Another command and they fall in according to mechanical aptitude. More re-shuffling will result.

By this time our thousand men will be thoroughly confused and we ourselves will have lost control of the situation. But we have not yet begun to consider the motivational or adjustment aspects of our thousand candidates, even though these may be much more important vocationally than their weight or the colour of their hair.

This is the kind of pitfall which awaits any attempt to classify people in simple types or in terms of quantitative scores. Such classifications work well enough when we are thinking of a single trait, and they work particularly well when that trait proves to be measurable. The more of such instruments of measurement the research-workers can produce, the better we shall be pleased, provided they are reliable and valid. But human personalities are made up of a multiplicity of traits, all fitted together into an infinite number of complex patterns, and a knowledge of the rankings of a limited number of these does not guarantee that we have summed up a particular person. Only when we have made an attempt to comprehend the pattern in which the traits are arranged in an individual personality can we be said to have made any adequate assessment of a particular candidate. On our Five-fold Grading very few people will occupy the same place on all five scales.

We are looking, therefore, for regularities within the individual, for some coherent pattern into which our information about him will fall, so that each item is properly related to one another and to the whole. Only then shall

we understand how someone who is above average in one trait, below in another, and just about average in a third, is really put together as a whole personality.

## **Training and Technique**

The allocation of people to jobs, then, can never be reduced to a technique, or to the application of simple rules to each case as it appears. Each interview must culminate in a decision, and that decision must be based on a full appreciation of the job-situation on the one hand and the candidate's personality-pattern on the other. Both of these will be complex and will demand some effort of comprehension on the interviewer's part. But even a not-entirely-adequate understanding of the total job situation and the whole personality-pattern is likely to result in a better decision about employment than an uninspired attempt to match up test scores with estimated levels of skill.

The rightness of that decision will depend ultimately on the insight of the interviewer. Application forms, test scores, five-fold gradings—all these are useful aids, but they are little more. They do not replace the interviewer's judgment, though they may help towards a sounder judgment by encouraging a systematic approach.

## **The General Plan**

Let us recapitulate the aids we have put before the interviewer. First of all we have the five headings under which we can arrange our ideas about human personality (Chap. II). We may divide these again into what the individual has started life with—his innate characteristics—and what he has acquired in the course of his life.



	INNATE	ACQUIRED
FIRST IMPRESSION AND PHYSICAL MAKE-UP	Health, strength, and vitality.	Manner, speech, and social experience.
QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS		Standards of general education, specialist training and work experience. Levels of expectation and conditions of life at the moment.
BRAINS AND ABILITIES	Basic endowment of mental ability. Pre-disposition to acquire certain skills easily and quickly.	Effectiveness in everyday life.
MOTIVATION	Strength of basic drives.	Directions in which satisfactions are habitually sought, and levels of achievement.
ADJUSTMENT	Basic emotional pattern.	Degree of control and maturity attained. Social roles which come most easily and naturally.

Under each of these headings, gradings can be set up which correspond roughly to a Normal Curve of Distribution.

### Job Study

Upon this framework we can arrange our requirements for any particular job, once we have studied the job to find out what it involves (Chap. VIII). The job-description may be thought of under four headings :

- (1) List of Duties.
- (2) Training and skill required.

- (3) Working conditions.
- (4) Economic conditions.

Upon this factual basis we may set up the job-specification or list of qualities required.

### **The Case-History**

Turning now to the candidate, we must assemble our information about him, partly replies to questions on a form, partly in the shape of test results, but mainly as a case-history elicited during an interview (Chap. IX). The case-history may be thought of as the following seven phases in the candidate's life story (Chap. XII).

- (1) Home and family background in childhood.
- (2) School life.
- (3) Further education or specialist training (if any).
- (4) Work history.
- (5) Service life (if any).
- (6) Spare time life.
- (7) Present circumstances.

### **The Interview**

The essential clues to each of these headings may be gathered during an interview, which in certain cases need only take a few minutes, provided that the candidate can quickly be brought to talk freely, frankly and confidently about himself.

The means of encouraging a candidate to do so have been discussed (Chap. X). They depend essentially on providing a reassuring physical setting and an interested and sympathetic listener for the interview. Conversational deftness on the interviewer's part will help to put the candidate quickly at his ease and will enable the ground to be covered rapidly, while an unobtrusively systematic approach will ensure that the main essentials are brought to light.

## **The Assessment**

With the facts at his disposal, the interviewer can arrange and interpret them so as to yield an assessment of the candidate's potentialities under the five headings of the plan (Chap. XI). When all the available information fits neatly and coherently into a pattern, the interviewer can be reasonably confident that his assessment is complete and accurate. His problem then becomes one of matching up a five-fold assessment with a five-fold specification.

## **Conclusion**

Every twelve months a complete age-group of the population moves from the educational institutions into a first job in industry, commerce or the community services. In the same period the ordinary movement of the country's man-power brings many changes of status and occupation, not only between firms and organisations, but within them. Quite literally, therefore, millions of opportunities are provided each year for individuals to be guided into a more suitable job and away from a less suitable one. The efficient use of our man-power and the happiness which millions of people find in their working life will depend on these opportunities being seized.

Each of these moves will be controlled by some individual who makes the decision to guide or accept a particular candidate into a particular job. It is to these individuals that this book is addressed. Experience suggests that insight into the situation and a systematic approach should lead to the right decision about nine times out of ten. Haphazard selection or allocation on the other hand means that a few people get into very suitable jobs, a large number into jobs that are fairly suitable but far from ideal, and a certain proportion into jobs which are definitely unsuitable.



Each interviewer will be faced with his own problems. If he is dealing with adolescents, these problems will be at once more difficult, while more will depend on a right decision. The shorter life-history, the unformed interest-pattern, and the light touch needed to establish contact quickly with young people, make this almost a study in itself. At the same time, the interviewing of hourly-paid, unskilled workers presents its own problems of rapid arrival at the essential clues during a short interview, and the reaching of a decision on case-histories which often seem too simple to be complete.

Then, again, with promotion interviewing, there is the problem of recognising unsuspected ability which has not yet found its outlet. Test results will frequently help here, while higher achievements in leisure pursuits than in work may also give important clues. The interviewer must be on guard against the deterministic error of supposing that because a candidate has reached only modest achievement in the past he is incapable of doing any better in the future. At the same time, he must not be betrayed into undue optimism simply because a candidate has made a favourable personal impression on him.

Few of us are brilliant or distinguished and few are capable of really great achievement. But every one has his modest contribution to make and his share of satisfaction to receive. Given the opportunity of work that makes use of our abilities and calls forth our best efforts, we may all make that contribution and receive that satisfaction. If the country is to make the best use of its man-power it must provide its citizens with those opportunities. For without such jobs its industry will be inefficient, and its people condemned to wasted effort and frustrated aspirations.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FIELD STUDIES IN ASSESSMENT

ON the face of it, it will be apparent that a systematic approach to selection is likely to avoid serious mistakes in placement, and to improve the chances that the individual will find himself in a job which is reasonably suited to his abilities and aspirations. It would be more satisfactory, however, if we could give some indications of the level of objectiveness that could be expected by the use of such methods, and of the kinds of results that have been achieved when they have been applied in practice.

There is a considerable literature on selection, some of which is not very favourable to interviewing. Doubts have been cast on the interview as a means of summing up an individual's potentialities for different kinds of job, and some studies have shown not only that interviewers fail to predict an individual's future performance, but also that they fail to agree among themselves. Many of the studies, however, suffer from the disadvantage that they do not make clear what is meant by an "interview", and make it difficult to decide whether the method employed is adequate.

If any conversation between an applicant and a member of the organisation to which he is applying is to be dignified by the title of "interview", then it is not surprising that the results are occasionally misleading. In fact, unless these conversations follow some kind of systematic plan, one would not expect them ever to provide more than vague conclusions, largely influenced by First Impression.

It is only when an interview follows a definite pattern, not necessarily a rigid and stereotyped one, but one which is based on a logical method of assessing human qualities, that one can expect any results from it at all.

There is a need for a series of studies which will show what can be expected of interviews. But these interviews must follow the same plan, and they must result in assessments which can be made the basis of objective comparisons. It is preferable that they should be carried out in conditions which approximate to those under which the normal selection process is carried out in industry, for the interview is likely to remain the principal means of assessment for most jobs. Those who participate in such studies should be the people who normally do selection work, with such training as may be necessary for them to follow the prescribed interview pattern.

Such a programme of studies has been under way in the Department of Industrial Administration in the College of Technology, Birmingham, for the last year or so. So far, only preliminary studies have been carried out, but it is hoped that these will lead to further projects from which really useful information will be derived. It will be several years, however, before the picture is complete, and in the meantime an opportunity is presented by the appearance of the third edition of this Handbook to make available the results of these preliminary studies. They are appended in the form in which they were originally written.



A PILOT STUDY OF INTERVIEW METHOD CARRIED OUT IN  
THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL ADMINISTRATION,  
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY, BIRMINGHAM

In industry the interview is by far the most widely used method of selection. On grounds of convenience, flexibility, and cost, it has considerable advantages, but many studies have thrown doubts on its reliability and validity. These are summarised in Chapter IX of "Personnel Selection in the British Forces",\* by Vernon and Parry. The authors conclude, however, that "the interview rather than tests must remain the prime instrument of vocational classification, and vocational psychologists are justified in spending as much of their time on attempts to improve the technique of interviewing as on devising more valid tests" (p. 164).

In this connection, the word "reliability" is used to indicate the degree to which the views of two interviewers on the same candidate correspond. The word "validity" indicates the degree to which an interview judgment is borne out by later performance on the job. It is the former conception which is under consideration here, and the key to this study is well expressed in a further quotation from Vernon and Parry (p. 153). They found that some of the evidence "suggests that psychologically trained interviewers who have reached a clear conception of what they are looking for can achieve very satisfactory reliability".

Training in employee interviewing is carried out in the Department of Industrial Administration, both in the normal classes on the Human Relations Aspects of Management and in Part-Time Schools specially arranged for the personnel staffs of local firms. The method recommended

\* University of London Press, 1949.

in these courses is the biographical interview, which has as its object the systematic covering of the applicant's life-history in as much detail as is possible in the time available. The Five-fold Grading is used to record the assessments in reasonably quantitative form, and also provides a means of setting out the qualities for any particular job.

The Five-fold Grading is based on the assumption that most human qualities are normally distributed throughout the population. That is to say, for any one attribute there will be one individual who possesses it to the maximum degree and another who has it to the minimum. Within this range there will be an average, round which most individuals will be grouped. It thus becomes possible to set up a scale for that attribute by determining the average grade in which approximately 40% of cases will be found, the above and below average grades, in each of which 20% of cases will be found, and the very much above and very much below average grades, each having approximately 10% of cases. Where the attribute can be measured in standard units, or where it can be estimated by standardised performances or tests, these scales can be made accurate and objective. Where this is not possible, descriptive gradings can be set up, based on estimate and observation.

Even though scales can be set up for each particular attribute, however, human beings have so many qualities that a very large number of scales would be necessary. Between many of these there would be little or no connection. To bring some order into the situation, therefore, it is advisable to group human attributes under a limited number of headings. Five of these have been chosen and are described below. Within each, appropriate scales have been developed.

*First Impression.* This covers appearance, turnout, manner, speech, physical capacities, health and vitality.

*Qualifications.* Used in the widest sense, this covers general education, vocational training, and work experience.

*Brains or Abilities.* This concerns speed of comprehension in various types of subject-matter. It is allied to Qualifications in the sense that certain levels are necessary to profit by certain types of training. It is possible, however, for someone to have Ability without Qualifications through lack of suitable opportunity.

*Motivation.* This deals with the goal-directed side of the personality, covering persistence, initiative, enterprise, and the ability to lay a plan and carry it through successfully.

*Adjustment.* This covers the emotional side of the individual, his ability to stand up to various kinds of strain, to accept responsibility, to fit in with others and play the part they expect of him.

These headings and descriptions of the gradings under each are set out in Appendix A. Appendix B shows the Interview Record Sheet and an Assessment Sheet. Each grading is further sub-divided into four, giving a total of twenty steps.

If this method of interview and assessment is sound, and if the training of the interviewers is adequate, two results will follow :

1. Two interviewers, after seeing the same individual, will arrive at the same assessment.
2. That assessment will indicate his suitability or otherwise for a particular job, and hence will predict his level of performance in it.



It is the first of these two propositions that is under consideration here. It is hoped that later studies, for which this will serve as a trial run, will be devoted to the second.

Substantial numbers of part-time students enrol for the first time in the Department of Industrial Administration each September. Twenty of these volunteered to act as subjects for this study. They attended a  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -hour session on the evening of Wednesday, 16th September, 1953, during which tests of Verbal, Numerical, Perceptual, Spatial, and Mechanical ability were administered to them. On the evening of Friday, 18th, or the morning of Saturday, 19th September, they attended for interview, each subject being given two appointments spaced thirty minutes apart. Four interviewers who had attended the Part-Time School during the Summer were also present on these occasions, all members of the Personnel Staffs of local firms whose competence was considered to be on the level that could be reached by anyone who had been properly selected for such a position, who had been adequately trained, and who had at least six months experience of Personnel work. They assisted with the testing, and they carried out the interviews and assessments. They were supplied beforehand with the test scores of the subjects they were to interview, but with no other details of them.

In order to approximate as closely as possible to the normal conditions of a busy Personnel Department, the appointments were timed at fifteen-minute intervals. This allowed a quarter of an hour for the interviewer to make contact with his subject, cover his life-history, take his notes, and write up his assessment on the Five-fold Grading. In actual fact it proved impossible to adhere to this time-table, and on future studies twenty minutes will be allowed.

The students who take classes in this Department of Industrial Administration work in local firms and attend either on part-time day release or in the evening. They are, in the main, either trainees, supervisors, junior executives, or workers' representatives; that is to say most of them have already progressed beyond the level of ordinary hourly-paid operatives, either through having been picked out for promotion, elected by their fellows, or taken on for their apparent potentialities for a higher position sometime in the future. Moreover, the courses in the department involve a considerable diversion of leisure time either to attending classes or coping with class work. Before they are accepted for enrolment students are seen by members of the full-time staff, who use their judgment in tactfully discouraging those who they think incapable of profiting by the instruction given. *Prima facie*, therefore, it would be expected that most of the subjects, if not all, were above the average in most of the qualities under consideration.

The results of the study are shown diagrammatically in Appendix C. The horizontal lines show the distance between the assessments of the two interviewers for each subject under each heading. Circles show where both interviewers arrived at the same assessment. (Under the Abilities heading only circles appear, since these were determined by test and not by the interviewers' assessments.) It will be seen that out of 80 cases where agreement or disagreement could be recorded (20 subjects under 4 headings):

Agreement was reached on		21 occasions (26%)
1 point of difference was recorded on	27	" (34%)
2 points	"	" (24%)
3 points	"	" (11%)
4 points	"	" (5%)

Thus, agreement was within 2 points or less (10% of the scale) on 84% of the possible occasions, while it was

3 or 4 points (10-20% of the scale) on 16% of the possible occasions. The average difference of all the gradings was 1.35 points, or 6.75% of the scale. For the individual subjects the average difference in the four gradings given by the two interviewers reached a maximum of 3 and a minimum of 0.25, the median being 1.25.

It is important that the limitations of this study should be fully appreciated. The numbers were small, the subjects were not a representative sample of the total population, and they were very similar in type, though not in background. Fuller studies, for which this was intended to provide experience in administration and experimental design, will be necessary before significant results can be expected. Within these limitations, however, the results support the hypothesis that interviewers trained in the same method and using the same categories for assessment reach substantially the same conclusions about individual cases.

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## APPENDIX A.

## THE FIVE-FOLD

	E Grade (10% Very much below Average)	D Grade (20% Below Average)
First Impression and Physical Make-up	Unkempt and badly dressed. Rough in speech and manner.	Rather scruffy and untidy about details. Slovenly speech and awkward manner.
Qualifications and Expectations	Interrupted schooling. No vocational training. Labouring job.	Left school at normal age, but did badly. Some training for a few months. Semi-skilled job.
Brains and Abilities	Only able to tackle the very simplest kind of work.	Able to cope with routine work under supervision.
Motivation	Disintegrated personality. Unable to set any goals at all.	Goals either below or unrealistically above capacity. Inconsistent and unpredictable unless carefully supervised.
Adjustment	Mental illness. Unable to cope with ordinary life.	Awkward and difficult. Has to have special consideration and careful handling.

## GRADING.

C Grade (40% Average)	B Grade (20% Above Average)	A Grade (10% Very much above Average)
Reasonably neat and tidy, but undistinguished. Correct speech. Quite at ease on own ground.	Well turned out and carefully dressed. Well spoken with attractive, friendly manner.	Perfectly turned out, distinguished appearance; very pleasant voice with charm of manner.
Left school at normal age, having done well. 3-5 years apprenticeship. Skilled jobs.	Grammar School to 16-18. Indentured Apprenticeship with 3-5 years part-time classes. Supervisory job.	University. Professional level of training. Managerial job.
Able to learn work which involves skill and day-to-day planning.	Able to plan the work of others within a framework of policy.	Able to assimilate and interpret detailed information and plan long-term developments.
Sets himself fair goals, and follows them up quite consistently. Could do better.	Goals high in relation to abilities and opportunities. Generally succeeds in what he sets out to do.	Aiming as high as possible, and never deviating from plan. Always achieves goals.
Fits in quite well with others, and can take fair responsibility, but with little powers of leadership.	Usually found in significant role. Can take responsibility for others. Doesn't lose his head.	Always found in leadership positions. Takes great responsibility without strain.

## APPENDIX B.

## INTERVIEW RECORD SHEET.

HOME BACKGROUND. Locality, Place and No. in family.	NAME :  Father's Occup. Spec. Circs.
SCHOOL. 1. Primary. 2. S.M. S.T. S.G. Pub. Other. Grade or Stream. G.C.E. Ord. Age. Eng. Lang. Eng. Lit. Lat. Fr. Ger. Gen. Sci. Chem. Phys. Math. App. Math. Art. Scrip. Hist. Geog. Biol. G.C.E. Adv. Age. Eng. Fr. Ger. Lat. Hist. Geog. Phys. Chem. Math. App. Math. Part in Games or other School activities. A. B. C. D. E.	
FURTHER EDUCATION. Type of Institution. Qualification. Part in Social Life.	
WORKING LIFE.	
SERVICE LIFE.	
SPARE TIME. Practical. Outdoor. Social. Intellectual.	
PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.	



## ASSESSMENT SHEET

	E Grade (10% Very Much Below Average).			D Grade (20% Below Average).			C Grade (40% Average).			B Grade (20% Above Average).			A Grade (10% Very Much Above Average).							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
FIRST IMPRESSION. (Appearance, Speech and Man- ner, Health, etc.)																				
QUALIFICATIONS. (General Education, vocational training and previous experience.)																				
ABILITIES.																				
Verbal																				
Perceptual																				
Numerical																				
Mechanical																				
Spatial																				
MOTIVATION. (Level of goals, realism and con- sistency in following them up.)																				
ADJUSTMENT. (Acceptability, sense of respon- sibility, reliability, and leader- ship.)																				
Recommendations.....																				
Interviewer.....																				

	E Grade (10% Very much below Average).			D Grade (20% Below Average).			C Grade (40% Average).			B Grade (20% Above Average).			A Grade (10% Very much above Average).							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
FIRST IMPRESSION. (Appearance, Speech and Manner, Health, etc.)																				
QUALIFICATIONS. (General Education, vocational training and previous experience.)																				
ABILITIES.																				
Verbal																				
Perceptual																				
Numerical																				
Mechanical																				
Spatial																				
MOTIVATION. (Level of goals, realism and consistency in following them up.)																				
ADJUSTMENT. (Acceptability, sense of responsibility, reliability, and leadership.)																				
Recommendations. Interviewer.....																				

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON A STUDY OF THE SELECTION  
OF STUDENT APPRENTICES CARRIED OUT IN THE  
GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY, WITTON, BIRMINGHAM

This study was planned in collaboration with the Personnel staff of the General Electric Company at Witton, in order to find out more about the working of systematic selection methods in the normal routine of industry. The Company engages between twenty and thirty student apprentices each year from Public or Grammar schools, and, as the training of these young men represents a substantial outlay, considerable care is taken to make sure that the right type is appointed. Their progress is carefully followed up so that any mistakes in selection are quickly brought to light. This seemed to provide a field in which systematic methods could suitably be utilised by the Personnel Staff without much change in the normal working of the Department.

Student apprentices are appointed at the age of 18 and go through a course of training in the works which lasts three years. During this time they attend part-time classes at local Technical Colleges and are expected to pass National and Higher National Certificates in the appropriate branches of engineering. The intention is that when they have completed their training and gained the necessary experience, they will gain Associate Membership of the appropriate Engineering Institution and will be capable of taking on either a post as an executive in an engineering firm or one which involves engineering responsibilities of professional level.

The type of young man who was considered likely to prove suitable for this kind of training was of B grade or upwards on the Five-fold Grading. The detailed specification was on the following lines :



*First Impression.* Reasonably well-turned-out and confident in manner. Sufficiently well-spoken and poised to mix easily with all levels in business. Physically fit and capable of standing up to the strains of an executive-level job.

*Qualifications.* General Certificate of Education at the Ordinary level as a minimum, with preferably some Science subjects at the Advanced level.

*Abilities.* Better than 70 out of 100 of the population on standard tests of verbal, numerical, perceptual, mechanical and spatial ability; preferably well above this level on most of the tests.

*Motivation.* Evidence at school and in spare time of setting himself high goals and achieving them by realistic application of his abilities; some indication of practical interests.

*Adjustment.* Some evidence of leadership and responsible roles in the case-history, sustained adequately over a period; stable and reliable.

Candidates were seen in the summer of 1953 by members of the Personnel Staff of the Company. Tests were administered to them, and they were interviewed biographically, all aspects of the case-history being carefully explored. Discussions were held among the interviewers to ensure that the same degree of significance was attached to similar levels of achievement, and determined attempts were made to make the subsequent gradings accurate and reliable. These were expressed in the normal Five-fold form, but a twenty-point scale was used under each heading. This, in effect, subdivided each of the five grades into four, and so allowed finer degrees of difference to be recorded. It was not anticipated that differences of one point would be reliable, for accuracy of such a degree

ought not to be claimed on scales of this nature. It was considered that differences of less than two points on the scale were insignificant, and throughout the study only differences of three points or more (representing roughly half a grade) are taken to represent a significant variation.

Twenty-eight of the candidates were accepted as apprentices, and they started work in September 1953. The Five-fold Gradings for each of them were removed from the files of the Personnel Department and were retained for future use in the study. They will be referred to from now on as the *Pre-engagement Assessments*.

In February 1954 the follow-up data for these twenty-eight student apprentices were assembled. Reports were available from the Supervisors of the departments in which they had done their practical training in the works. Class and examination marks were available from the Technical Colleges they were attending. The Resident Warden of the hostel in which they lived, who was also the Staff Manager, made reports based on his contact with them both during their spare time and in working hours. As will be described below, all of this was cast into the form of a Five-fold Grading and from now on will be referred to as the *Six-month Follow-up*.

It is important that the limitations of this study should be made clear at the outset. There was no intention of conducting a controlled experiment on selection, for even had it been possible to make arrangements for a detailed comparison with the results of previous methods, such arrangements would have so altered the conditions that they would have no longer been representative of normal working. The project was, therefore, designed quite intentionally so as to involve as few changes as possible in the Department's routine of selection and follow-



up, and the aims were limited to the following two objectives.

(a) To find how far mistakes in selection could be avoided; a mistake in selection being defined for this purpose as a young man who proved unsuitable at or before the Six-month Follow-up, and whose appointment was not confirmed after the six-month probationary period.

(b) To find out how far the Pre-engagement Assessment conformed to the Six-month Follow-up, when the two were laid out in a manner which permitted straightforward comparison. This, in effect, would indicate whether the qualities which the candidate was judged to possess when he was seen before joining the Company, did, in fact, make themselves felt once he had begun his training.

The Pre-engagement Assessments present no difficulty in this study, for they are simply what a well-run Personnel Department can achieve with little or no disturbance to its routine, and they should represent as accurate an assessment of a candidate as can be achieved in the normal working of industry. But none of the sources of follow-up data were fully satisfactory in any scientific sense. The Supervisors' Reports were made on a common form, and could be given numerical values to facilitate comparison. With a number of apprentices, however, it was apparent that there was considerable variation in the gradings they received from different Supervisors, and it is impossible to be sure that these represent actual differences in performance and not variations in the raters' standards or differences in the quality of contact between apprentices and foremen. Gradings for Quality of Work, Effort, and General Progress all appeared to be concerned with the apprentices' actual performance on the job, and



they were combined under one heading of Work. Gradings for Conduct were kept separate, following the normal practice of the Department, as they were considered to cover other aspects of the apprentices' behaviour in the works. There was, however, a correlation of 0.87 between the Word and Conduct gradings which suggests that there is a considerable degree of Halo Effect between the two.

There was also a considerable amount of variation between the Technical College markings for the same student in different classes. Again it was not possible to be sure of the standards, and it seemed an impossible task to make a detailed investigation of the reliability of this criterion. The simplest way of dealing with both the Supervisors' Reports and the Technical College markings seemed to be to combine them into one figure, and then to rank the students in accordance with the totals. Values from 20 down to 11 were given to the rankings which brought them to a scale which was approximately comparable with the numerical values given under the other headings of the Five-fold Grading. This procedure will quite obviously not stand up to close examination, particularly as there was a negative correlation of 0.63 between the Supervisors' Reports and the Technical College Markings. This indicates that there is a marked tendency for the students who do well at Technical College to be rated low by foremen in the departments, and vice versa. Nevertheless, it seemed the best that could be done without a disproportionate expenditure of time and effort.

The Resident Warden's gradings were based on his experience of the apprentices in their spare time and at work. As he had been instrumental, in his capacity of Staff Manager, in initiating the whole project, he was fully conversant with the levels represented by the Five-fold Grading. He had, however, taken part in the

pre-engagement interviewing of some of the candidates, so that, in effect, what was being compared in a number of cases, was his impression at the original interview with his judgment of the apprentices after having been in contact with them for six months. The fact that he did not have access to the Pre-engagement Assessments during the interval, and had probably forgotten about them, does not prevent this from being a further source of weakness in the scientific sense. But, from the day-to-day point of view, it is not without value to find out how often and how far an experienced Personnel Officer has altered his views about a young man between seeing him before engagement, and six months later when his appointment has to be confirmed after the probationary period.

### **Results of the Preliminary Study**

The first objective of the study, that of avoiding mistakes in selection, was clearly achieved. No apprentices fell by the wayside during the probationary period, and all their appointments were confirmed at the end of six months. It was apparent that none fell below the minimum considered necessary to profit by the training and achieve the standards expected at the conclusion. This may, perhaps, fairly be compared with the previous year, when four apprentices failed to survive the probationary period, for there seem to be no other changes in the conditions which would affect this result. There was some word-of-mouth evidence that this year's apprentices seemed more generally suitable than the entrants of former years, but this could not be supported by quantitative evidence, and should not be allowed to weigh to any great extent.

Turning to the second objective, that of finding out how the Pre-engagement Assessments conformed to the Six-



month Follow-up, the situation is rather more complex. Both, it is true, were expressed in the form of Five-fold Gradings, but it seems advisable to recapitulate just what these were based on under the different headings.

*First Impression.* In this case we are comparing the interviewer's gradings with those of the Staff Manager six months later. Both are set out on a twenty-point scale, on which differences of less than two points are considered to be insignificant.

*Qualifications and Abilities.* In the Pre-engagement Assessment the candidates' Qualifications are an assessment of his level of education, which, according to the job specification, can vary only between General Certificate of Education at the Ordinary or the Advanced level, if he is to be accepted. The variations here, therefore, are probably too small to be of any value, while the attribute assessed does not correspond to anything in the Six-month Follow-up except Technical College Markings, and these for only one term. His Abilities were assessed by standard tests, and here again there seems to be nothing in the Six-month Follow-up which is directly comparable. In the Six-month Follow-up we have the Supervisors' Reports and the Technical College Markings, combined into one grading. To enable some sort of comparison to be made, the Pre-engagement Assessment gradings for Qualifications have been combined with the scores on the Ability tests into a similar grading. Numerical values have been attached to each which fit them into a similar scale as that used for the other headings. When the two sets of gradings are compared, a Rank Order Correlation of 0.61 was obtained. This indicates a highly significant level of agreement.

*Motivation and Adjustment.* The situation with these headings is exactly similar to that under First Impression.



When the numerical values for the Pre-engagement Assessment and the Six-month Follow-up are added up for each apprentice and the totals compared, a Rank Order Correlation of 0.41 emerges. This is significant in the narrow statistical sense, but having regard to the limitations of the criteria discussed above, the mere arithmetic is hardly convincing. It seems advisable to go further into detail and consider the differences under the separate headings. These are shown below where they exceed two points on the twenty-point scale :

	Difference of less than 2 points	Difference of 3 points	Difference of 4 points	Difference of 5 points
First Impression	22	5	—	1
Qualifications/ Abilities .	19	3	2	4
Motivation .	23	2	3	—
Adjustment .	23	1	3	1
Totals . .	87	11	8	6

Thus, out of the 116 occasions when agreement or disagreement could have been achieved, 87 (75%) showed agreement within the limits which were considered possible.

A great deal depends, however, on whether these disagreements were scattered at random throughout the cases, or whether they were mainly confined to a small number of individuals. On examination, it is apparent that the latter situation obtains, and that most of the disagreements are accounted for by six cases. When these are left out, the Rank Order Correlation between the numerical values for the Pre-engagement Assessment and the Six-month Follow-up rises to 0.84, which is high enough to outweigh all the deficiencies outlined above,

and almost certainly indicates a considerable level of agreement between the two.

## Conclusions

This study is intended to be one of a series to be carried out in the normal industrial situation with only such changes from existing practice as are essential to the introduction of systematic selection methods. It is not anticipated that it will ever be possible to carry out a properly controlled experiment in the rigid scientific sense, so that the studies will always be defective either in regard to the adequacy of their criteria or in the possible intrusion of outside variables. Nevertheless, these are the conditions in which selection is normally carried out in industry, and it seems essential to study them as they are, and not as one would like them to be for experimental purposes.

In this particular case, the study has shown the following results :

(a) Out of twenty-eight student apprentices selected by systematic methods, none failed to survive the probationary period of six months, and thus all were, in the opinion of those who are responsible for their training and future progress, suitable for their appointments.

(b) In twenty-two out of the twenty-eight cases there was a marked correspondence between the Pre-engagement Assessment of the apprentices and the results of a Six-month Follow-up. In the six cases where there was divergence, this was still within the range of suitability for the appointment.

These results are shown diagrammatically in the Appendix.

Acknowledgment is made to the General Electric Company, Witton, and in particular to Mr. D. J. Rollason and his staff, for their collaboration in this study.





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